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Filipiniana reinvented as bustiers replace kimonos, pañuelos

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'Hot' money inflow down 70% in May

Sports
Pistons sere over the one that got away

Archbishop says lawmakers making fools of themselves

By Marcho S. Rivera

MANILA. Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales yesterday assailed the slow count of last month's presidential election, stating squabbling lawmakers were "making fools of themselves" while the country waited for Congress to declare the next president.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

VIPS at Reagan funeral ceremony run for cover

WASHINGTON — Limousines and flights in Washington are in high gear preparing for Ronald Reagan's funeral ceremony, timed from the Capitol after police feared an explosive headed for the building and

Friday, June 11, 2004 • 32 pages / vol. IV / no. 184
website: www.inq7.net

New round of power rate increases looms

Adjustments on top of Meralco's 13.7¢/kWh hike in July

THE MILLION-PESO question: Were these hooded men really witnesses to the province-wide fraud committed in Cebu to the camp of President Macapagal to give her a winning margin of 1.1 million votes as alleged by Fernando Poe Jr.'s supporters? They were presented to the media on Thursday at the Sacred Heart Center in Cebu City.

By Abigail L. Ho
Business

ELECTRICITY rates seem to have nowhere to go but up.

The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) approved yesterday higher generation rates for electricity supplied by the state-run National Power Corp. (Napocor) to customers in the Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao grids, including the Manila Electric Co. (Meralco).

Meralco is Napocor's biggest customer, accounting for 40 percent of the firm's total energy sales in 2003.

The increase in Napocor's generation charges will result in higher electricity rates for Meralco's more than four million customers.

It is on top of the 13.7 centavos per kilowatt hour (kWh) hike in rates that Meralco customers will be paying beginning next month. Small consumers, though, will get a discount.

The upward adjustments in Meralco rates in July was for the higher generation charges of Napocor from November 2003 to January 2004 due to higher fuel prices and a weaker peso.

President Macapagal-Arroyo appealed to Meralco, the country's largest power distributor, to defer its plan to increase rates next month. If consumers had been given over the notice of oil price increases and the two rate adjustments.

Her spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, said she had gone out of her way to make the appeal to Meralco, which is controlled by the Lopez family and partially-owned by the government.

"She (Arroyo) asked for and everyone must pitch in," said Bunye, who noted that the appeal was mainly for "social amelioration and relief" and to "alleviate the pressures on the prices of prime commodities."

When reached for comment, Meralco president Jesus Francisco said in a telephone interview that he would get in touch with Bunye first before giving a response.

Starting with Napocor's May 26 to June 15 billing period, power users in Luzon will have to pay P0.1 per kWh, up 22 centavos from the old rate of P1.20. Mindanao users will be charged 30 centavos more per kWh, up 22 centavos from the old rate of P1.20.

Visayas customers will now have to pay P1.32 per kWh, up 22 centavos from the old rate of P1.20. Mindanao users will be charged 30 centavos more per kWh, up 22 centavos from the old rate of P1.20.

Meralco consumers to receive ₱13-B refund

By Abigail L. Ho
Business

NOTWITHSTANDING through with its P66-billion refund for overcharges since 1994, Manila Electric Co. will have to give back some P13 billion in meter and service deposits to six more than four million customers in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

The newly approved Magna Carta for Residential Electricity Consumers has done away with meter deposits that new consumers in distribution utilities, not only Meralco, had to pay before new meters could be installed in their homes or establishments.

Energy Regulatory Commissioner Rod Bael Bidin Alonzo II said as a binding yesterday that meter deposits made by customers of distribution utilities before the passage of this Magna Carta would also be entitled to the refund.

In its 2003 balance sheet, Meralco said its customers' meter and bill deposits amounted to P9.6 billion. Including interest, the amount goes up to P13.26 billion.

"The meter and bill deposits that its customers had already paid would have to be refunded to them. But we'll make guidelines on how to go about these refunds," Alonzo said.

He cautioned that, based on severance personnel during public consultations on the Magna Carta, the cost of such a decision was already embedded in private distribution utilities' rate base, so a separate deposit should no longer be charged for it.

An electric meter now costs between P600 and P1,200. Customers pay a deposit equivalent to 2/3 of the cost of the meter, depending on the service of the kilowatts of any other power distribution utility.

Under current arrangements, customers are required to maintain a minimum deposit that before they can recover their deposits, which cover the cost of meters and services.

KNP parades 10 'poll fraud witnesses'

By Cornie S. Fernandez
AM Magna Bureau

CEBU CITY— Inebriety clad in slippers, sleeping and T-shirts with their faces covered with towels, 10 men were presented as witnesses yesterday by the opposition Koalisyon ng Naghahalong Pilipino (KNP) to prove that the conduct of elections in Cebu was not "immaculately" clean.

Jose Cuelo, one of the KNP lawyers, refused to identify the men or allow them to speak for "security reasons."

Three of them, he claimed, were members of the city's board of elections inspectors (BEI).

KNP lawyer Rufus Rodriguez said the opposition would present three BEI members before the joint canvassing committee in Congress when the certificates of canvass (CoCs) in the city and province are taken up.

Their affidavits would be used to find precinct to open the election returns of the city and province, to compare them with the CoCs and statements of votes, he said.

In a statement, Malacañang yesterday challenged the opposition and its allies "to formalize their complaints" of election fraud.

"Since nothing has been filed in the proper venue up to this time, we can all presume that these allegations are baseless media bubble," Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said.

In a news conference, Cuelo said the statements of the witnesses would cast doubt on the President's claim that Cebu

Top donors to GMA, FPJ bids listed

By Marvin P. Mariñ

THE FROM Family's Jaguar, Sandra Villarosa, was the single biggest donor to President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign, the statements of expenditures and contributions filed in her behalf yesterday showed.

Villarosa, who heads "The Firm" as his company of lawyers is known, handed over P30 million on Feb. 17. The donation was matched by K-4 coalition treasurer Antonio Villar who took out a P20 million loan from Metrobank and listed it as a donation and later gave another P10 million to the campaign.

Other big contributors were Catalina Tan, Jose Dizon and Jose Antonio, who gave P20 million each, and Alfredo Ramos, Francisco Licos, Pedro Tan, Raymond Mariano, Alejandro Clemente, Philip Ranoco, Abraham Sonito, Rudolf Bagtas, Vivencio Bayot, Francisco Bayot and Felix Ang, who all gave P10 million each.

A spokesman on the statement of expenditures and contributions filed by lawyer Silvestre Gonzaga for the administration S.

8 'graduating' senators bid farewell, laud Drilon

By TJ Burgonio

"GRADUATES?" senators yesterday said goodbye to all that in six different versions, ranging from bitter to nostalgic, ominous to reassuring.

Eight would later claim the floor to speak on concerns for the last time as legislators at the end of their current six-year term, among them Gregorio Honasan and Robert Barbers—next to shows.

Loren Legarda, Rafael Jaworski, Ramon Revilla, John Osmeña, Vicente Sotto III and Nene Aquino-Pimentel spoke memorable parting words.

"I arrived in Congress well," said Legarda, vice presidential candidate, as she bade colleagues, nemesis and friends farewell, in a stirring valedictory speech. She supported the contention that she had "done justice to the overwhelming mandate of more than 11 million Filipinos" who elected her in 1998.

"I was sworn into the Senate on a fine and glorious day for democracy—an event that marked a smooth transition from one president to another," she recalled. "Today, I am bidding farewell to the Senate in a manner of a political comeback, dark and foreboding."

Legarda, who was the running mate of then opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr., claimed she just received "additional votes, and to have been sworn for another final as well as the ongoing canvass

AMONG MY SOUVENIRS: Outgoing senators, who each delivered a valedictory prior with Senate President Franklin Drilon at the close of the 12th Congress on Thursday. From left, Ramon Revilla Jr., John Osmeña, Nene Pimentel, Tito Sotto, Loren Legarda and Rafael Jaworski.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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Sandigan OKs Jinggoy trip to US

By Armand N. Nocum

THE ELECTION of Jinggoy Estrada to the Senate has apparently made him less of a flight risk in the opinion of the Sandiganbayan.

Yesterday, the anti-graft court's special division issued a resolution allowing Estrada to go to the United States to grace the Independence Day celebration of Filipino communities there—for only four days.

In their ruling, Justices Edgardo Cruzado, Teresita Leonardo-de Castro and Rta. Celerina Cotoco-Estrada said that with his election to the Senate, the risk of the young Estrada fleeing from justice was "not only nil but practically non-existent."

Jinggoy stands accused of being an "accessory" in the graft and plunder cases filed against his father, ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Besides, the court said, while the right to travel of the accused was subject to court approval, the law remained that the evidence against him was "not strong."

Using the same argument, the court last year permitted the younger Estrada to post bail of P500,000, which allowed him to leave the detention he shared with his father.

The justices also said that the permission is based granted to a member of the "august body of the Senate"—in which behalf the travel request was granted—redounded to "respect due to a co-equal branch of government."

But the court asked Estrada to post a P100,000 travel bond. He is to leave the country on June 11 and return on June 14.

He is going to the US upon the invitation of the California-based Pinoy Filipino Inc., which organizes the yearly Independence Day celebration in North America. The group had asked Estrada to be their guest speaker on June 12.

The court also noted that Estrada's trip to the US did not carry any risk or concern with regard to "personnel securing public safety or public health."

"The mantle of the presumption of innocence still covers him," the court said, adding though that Estrada's election to the Senate would not affect the case at all and his trial will proceed.

ESTRADA

Biggest poll contributor was Aboitiz

By Marvin P. Mortil

THE BIGGEST campaign contributor in the recent elections was Luis Aboitiz who gave P60 million to losing senatorial candidate John Osmeña, records obtained from the Commission on Elections showed.

The same documents showed that the biggest spender among the 11 senatorial candidates who had submitted their statements of contributions and expenditures as of yesterday was senator-elect Manuel "Lito" Lapid who said he spent P94.75 million.

In contrast, President Macapagal-Arroyo spent well below the P445-million cap on presidential candidates but Malacañang could not say exactly by how much or where the excess had come from.

In a briefing, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that a three-member committee had told him the President's expenditures were much lower than the spending limit allowed by the Comelec, which for presidential and vice presidential candidates is P3.0 each for the estimated 43.1 million registered voters.

Roxas' campaign received P52-million from contributors, including his mother, Judy Araneta Roxas, who gave P20 million.

The balance of the P94.75 million he spent—P42.75 million—had come "from his own funds, the new senator said.

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, three vice presidential candidates, 11 senatorial bets and about 30 party-list groups had filed their statements of contributions and expenditures.

Those who fail to submit their reports cannot assume their posts and will be fined between P1,000 and P50,000 for the first offense and P2,000 to P60,000 for the second offense. A second offense would also mean perpetual disqualification from holding public office.

One senatorial candidate who did not spend a single centavo was Ismael Ikpan's who said that he did not campaign and did not receive any contributions.

De Castro

Despite this, the Comelec canvass of senatorial votes showed that Ikpan's—who ran under disqualified presidential candidate Eddie Gil's Partido Isang Bansa, Isang Diwa—got more than 60,000 votes.

Among the vice presidential candidates, Sen. Noli de Castro spent the most—P80,694,775.77—while Sen. Loren Legarda spent P62,886 million. Former Agusan reported expenditures of P56.58 million.

In his report, De Castro said he received P12.292 million in contributions and spent P19.363 million of his own funds.

His biggest contributor was then Chair of Abby Enterprises who gave P5.015 million.

On the other hand, Legarda had more contributors, eight of whom gave her P5 million each while 19 others handed over P1 million each.

Those who gave her P5 million were Sen. Legarda, Aurelio Gonzales, Antonio Pelo, Jr., Jesus Arca and Fernando Angat. Napoleon Joseph Undaga gave her P4 million while Antonio Legarda gave her P3 million.

Among the senators, actor Lito Lapid said he spent P94.886 million, while Osmeña, who lost, spent P62.248 million.

Another losing candidate, Orlando Mercado, spent P54.837 million, followed by actress Rosa Rosal—this with P29.920 million, and former basketball star Robert Jaworski with P24.167 million.

Iglesia ni Cristo candidate Eduardo Ermita, a Kaakbay ng Naglakasang Pilipino candidate like Sen. Lapid, spent P22 million, while winning KNP candidate Sen. Aquilino Pimentel spent P18.75 million.

Former Sen. Ernesto Herrera, who also lost, spent P6.837 million, while Barbara Yaeny A. spent P1.154 million and Oliver Lozada, P138,000.

Other senatorial candidates who filed their reports were Alfredo Lim who claimed only P6 million in expenses and Ramon "Bong" Revilla with expenditures of P28.347 million. Loser Ramon Mitra Jr. said he spent only P50,000. Rich Del Castillo spent P...

Explosive materials bound for Zambaonga seized at Manila port

By Alcuin Papa

MILITARY and police intelligence operatives yesterday afternoon arrested at the Manila port area a suspected terrorist who was about to load seven boxes of explosive materials aboard a ship bound for Zamboanga City.

Intelligence agents identified the suspect as Alejandro Aguirre, who was nabbed at around 3:30 p.m. at the Pier 18 of the Manila North Harbor.

Arresting officers seized 50,000 non-electric blasting caps, a 1.6-km detonating cord and 4.6 kg mining fuse. All the materials were in cargo boxes which had been declared as "general merchandise" with a value of P20,000.

Preliminary investigation revealed the explosives source had been given to Aguirre by a certain Sonny Ajang, said to be a Muslim from Quiapo, Manila.

Officials ordered the boxes opened after a back-trailing dog sat in front of them, a sign that explosives were inside the containers.

Authorities are trying to determine if the suspect belongs to a terrorist group operating in the country.

Don't celebrate yet, HS 'bridge' foes told

By Gil C. Cabacungan and Luige del Puerto

CONTROVERSY of the controversial bridge program may have to hold back celebrating the education department's release on the issue.

Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the decision to make optional the program to put 700,000 incoming public high school freshmen through a year of remedial classes in English, Math and Science was just a "temporary postponement."

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo had agreed to a partial deferment of the program's implementation because of the duration of preparing parents, teachers and student groups.

"But it doesn't mean we will drop the program entirely. We're just postponing their agony because eventually they have to go through it in program," Bunye said.

Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus on Tuesday announced that it would be left to the parents to decide whether to put their poorly performing children through the extra year of pre-high school classes.

But factions of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) that supports the program said the switch poses a problem for the 930,000 incoming high school freshmen who can not academically ready for high school and who should go through the remedial classes.

They urged the DepEd officials to push through with the bridge program's implementation and asked the protesting parents not to flunk or shy away only in terms of the financial cost.

"DepEd should be firm in its resolve to implement the bridge program. We need to simultaneously address the issue of competency. What would happen to those students now?" said Thea Bautista, the ACT secretary-general.

"Some poor children are even more poor not because of economic problems. We cannot afford for our children to finish their school four years long," she said in a statement.

She said the DepEd should broaden its consultations with parents over the issue.

Deputy Director Alice Bellaros, the education secretary's media affairs, admitted that the department had failed to reach and explain the program to as many parents as possible.

"If we had explained it better to parents and students, we would have had less opposition," she told reporters.

She blamed the failure on the mechanism of the May elections.

Bellaros said the department had been expecting that the elections would be automatic, which meant public school teachers would not have been deputized to man the election precincts. But when the automation plans failed, the energy of the education department was diverted from its programs, including the bridge program, she said.

DepEd officials are confident, however, that the parents themselves would be clamoring for the program once they see the merits of their purely pro-learning children.

Corrections

ON IMAGE 1 of the June 9 issue, headlined Boost' seed grows gross in an ad promoting vegetarian diet was described in an information dispatch from the sponsoring organization, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, as "made exclusively of lettuce leaves." A reader said she thought it was cabbage. We found the supplier of the leafy greens in Tagaytay City who said the reader was right—it was cabbage.

* * *

IN THE first edition of the June 10 issue, the New York Times article on the documentary portrait "Sembla"—which appeared on Page A7—misnamed the age of Ferdinand Marcos when he won the presidency in 1965. Marcos was 48 years old then, not 56.

* * *

IN THE June 9 issue, Page A22, the head of a story says "leaders will please bed to arrest of killer" instead of "killer," the word "suspect" should have been used in the head. While the prosecutor could not be had "killed" the victim is still alive, legally he cannot be called "a killer" until he has been convicted of the killing by a court.

* * *

READERS may send their requests or writings for correction of factual errors to Gerry Lirio, city editor; Philippine Daily Inquirer, 4th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Alexandra Street, Makati City; fax No. 897-47 83-94; and e-mail address: gtl.lir@inquirer.com.ph and dayledet@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Raul Pangalangan, readers' advocate, the same address and fax numbers as those of the city editor, and e-mail address: rpadadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

Tornado kills 2 in Leyte town

A TORNADO ripped through the coastal town of Dulag in Leyte, killing at least two people and destroying hundreds of flimsy houses, the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) said yesterday.

Four people were also reported injured while a dozen of residents remained missing after the tornado that lasted 15 minutes hit the town at around 4:20 a.m. on Wednesday, according to the NDCC.

The national disaster agency also reported that 150 houses had been destroyed and 700 others damaged due to a tidal surge set off by the storm.

One of the fatalities was identified as Nineteen-did Bonito Garcia while three injured were Norberto Consuelo, 45, a resident of Barangay San Vicente; Rodolfo Aubero, of Barangay Gandang Carlos Garpa, 39, of Barangay Bagacay and Dionisio Ilo, 63, of Barangay Tabu, all in Dulag town, the NDCC said.

Though the center of the tornado was in Barangay Poblacion, it affected 14 other barangays in the town.

"We are still assessing the damage on the ground," said Nilda Bala of the NDCC.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard said yesterday the body of one fisherman had been recovered and that they had rescued 14 out of 15 fishermen from two motor boats that sank in stormy weather in central Philippine last Wednesday.

Mr. Silverosa, however, remained missing after the boats were thrown off Eastern Samar, one of several provinces battered by strong winds and rains. Coast Guard spokesman Adrian Bello said.

"We are now searching for the missing fisherman because the boats are relatively new," Bello said.

Storm moving out

Tropical storm "Conson" (international name Imbudo) was heading into the South China Sea yesterday after doing damage to about a thousand houses in Leyte.

Conson's center is expected this morning to be 240 km southwest of Coron, Palawan, where Storm Signal No. 1 remained in effect as of late afternoon yesterday.

The previous storm "Tropical" affected up to 10,000 residents in Northern and Central Luzon, 2,000 of them in Pampanga, Bocos Norte, while the rest were in Zambales, Bataan, and Tarlac, the agency reported.

Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman "Dinky" Soliman said a "non-existent" budget could have been realized if not for two fishermen, Hernan Bacarchon, 55, who went missing in Pangasinan at the height of Tropical Ely.

Six evacuation centers housing around 300 families displaced by Tropical were still in operation as of yesterday, the official during a press briefing. With reports from Alcuin Papa, Pol Custodio, AP and Reuters

Palace rethinks holiday economics

By Gil C. Cabacungan

TODAY is a regular working day after Malacañang decided to give its "holiday economics" a rest following complaints from business executives.

Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye announced in a briefing yesterday that holiday economics would not be applied to the Independence Day weekend which would have made today a holiday.

In order to boost domestic tourism, the government in 2002 made it a policy to move holidays falling on a weekend to Friday or Monday, thus extending the weekend to three days.

Bunye explained that declaring a three-day Independence Day weekend would not be practical anyway because of the weather.

"The holiday economics was really geared to increase tourism especially during the days when you can really go out. But now, it's really very difficult to go out because of the weather," he said.

The Department of Labor and Employment has declared June 12, Independence Day which falls on a Saturday, a regular holiday to guide employers in the payment of the holiday pay.

It is possible the government may have decided to rethink holiday economics after businessmen complained that while the policy of extended holiday weekends has been good for tourism, it has been financially ruinous to their businesses.

Business groups, particularly the Philippine Exporters Confederation, have complained against the government's practice of declaring new holidays on short notice which they said disrupted their production and delivery schedules.

Alabang branch of RCBC robbed

By Leila B. Salaverria

MEMBERS were barged into the Alabang branch of the Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC) bank at noon yesterday and carted away at least P500,000, assembling two persons in a classroom as they escaped.

Three suspects were believed to be involved in the robbery, according to Southern Police District Director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulos.

Two suspects had entered the bank along the Alabang Expressway in Muntinlupa near Ayala Alabang Village, at 12:45 p.m. and wanted to use its ATM. Soon after, two men pretending to be customers followed.

Just 5 minutes

The four then disarmed the security guard at the door and announced the holdup. Two guards have been posted at the door, but one of them had taken his lunch break while the robbery was in progress.

The suspects took cash from tellers and stuffed them into duffel bags. Bulos said the suspects failed to get more money because the bank vault was locked.

The robbery took all of eight minutes.

Lookout

Soon after the suspects fled, an armored van drove up to the main door. Two security escorts, apparently sensing what was happening, began shooting at the suspects.

But the four opened fire as well, and were joined by several seven of their companions wearing bonnets who acted as lookouts.

A Camp Crame police station at the back of Sta. Lucia Mall is the police outpost closest to the highway.

Officials suspected were Jovencio Ojanes, a security guard, and Saul Marquez.

The suspects, some carrying M-14 and M-16 rifles, escaped on board three vehicles. One of the getaway vehicles, a green Honda van, was later recovered along Commerce Avenue in Alabang, according to the Muntinlupa police.

Authorities believe the suspects could be members of a gang that robbed a Bank of Commerce branch last month.

From dump to bus depot to park

By Edson Cuervo Tandoc Jr.

SAVEMAS residents may soon look forward to a day walk all in rows when part of its city bus terminal is converted into a mini-park this year.

The project, conceived after the hugely popular bay walk along Roxas Boulevard in Manila, would feature food stalls, benches and tree-lined pathways for promenaders along C-4 road in Barangay Bagumbayan.

Reelected Mayor Felino Tiangco wants the work on the project to begin as soon as the Metro Manila Development Authority has relocated around 70 families living in the 2,500-sq. m. asphalt bus terminal by the bay.

Once a dump

Once a garbage dump and home to low-income families who had encroached makeshift homes in the spacious lot by the bay, the municipal government last year decided to develop the area into a commercially viable facility, but had no funds for the project.

A wealthy resident later offered to level off and fill up the land for free. While the local government was looking into plans to improve the property, MMDA officials were scouting for a bus terminal to ease traffic in Metro Manila and channel upon the dump.

Around P1.6 million was spent by the MMDA for the reclamation, and used for the construction of parking slots, utility, waiting sheds and loading and unloading areas. Operational since January, it can accommodate 72 buses.

Though work on the project has yet to start, the spacious terminal grounds have already attracted a steady stream of visitors.

Taking a break

The bus terminal may be nearby, and the winds strong, but children and adults as well are lured by the prospect of a good restaurant ambiance to take a quick nap.

Pedicab driver Leonardo Ventura, for instance, sleeps by every siesta in a vehicle to catch a break.

Hawkers with pushcart lunches make up part of the noontime crowd, apart from regular customers like Boto, who works at the nearby Nauvasa Hotpoint, who takes an occasional dip into the bay to cool off in his friends.

"Mukhito kapag hubarin nami, dito kami naglulugi," [Dito is where we bring our wives the swimsuit is light] he told the Inquirer as he prepared for another dive.

Nearby canteens and eateries at viaduct hotspots the bay side early in the morning to entertain, or enjoy the breeze in the afternoon, according to municipal planning officer Buffy Tuvera said.

The municipal government is to builds its Option Kiss Entrance activities in the terminal every Saturday and Sunday. On weekends, the area teems with motorbikes and joggers.

THIS part of the bus terminal will soon have benches, food stalls and trees lined pathways.

2 cops held for car theft, kidnap cases

By Alexis Pages

TWO POLICE officers allegedly involved in kidnapping and car theft have been arrested right inside the National Police headquarters in Camp Crame.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. yesterday presented before media in his Insp. Wilfredo Abordo and PO1 Gerardo Prudente, both members of the anti-narcotics team of the Western Police District Station 9 in Sta. Mesa.

Both were arrested on Wednesday while attending an anti-drug conference in Camp Crame.

Police said the suspects were involved in a series of abductions in Las Piñas City starting June 5.

Here, the suspects were said to have abducted Amado Hamano-oto near the SM South Mall.

The following day the same suspects together with other still unidentified men kidnapped a certain "Alak" and a woman named his car. Finally, the suspects abducted Benito Chua.

The three were released simultaneously that day after Chua's wife paid a P1.7 million ransom.

During interrogation, Abordo admitted that he and his cohorts arrested Chua for alleged involvement in drug trafficking.

But Ebdane said Chua was not wanted by the police for any case involving illegal drugs.

GOOD NEWS!
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Pink fences to help deter crime

By Luigo del Puerto

NOT FOR jaywalkers alone, but as a deterrent against jeepney and PX-taxi holdupmen.

That's how police look at the pink steel jaywalking fences that are being put up in certain portions of the Marcos Highway, a major thoroughfare in Eastern Metro Manila.

Marikina City police recently asked the Metro Manila Development Authority, which oversees the construction of the six-through-lanes, to extend the fences throughout Marcos Highway, the scene of a series of robberies since the start of June.

"This way, robbers cannot cross the streets that easily. A delay in their movements means more chances of catching them," said Marikina Police Sr. Supt. Felipe Rojas.

"It's easier to scare the suspects when they are forced to stay on one side of the streets. Three fences would help a lot," he added.

'Jeepney shopping'

Four robbers involved on Sunday along the busy highway often used this tactic that investigators call "jeepney shopping," meaning, as the term rids not only to shuttle street for also to target potential victims.

After complaints from motorists, policemen have been deployed in strategic posts along Marcos Highway recently.

STEEL pink fences now dot stretches of Quezon Avenue in Quezon City and Marcos Highway in Pasig City and Marikina.

The move is part of "Oplan Bakli (sidewalk)," a comprehensive effort of policemen to secure schools and areas where students converge.

Security problems in the thoroughfare are expected to be discussed today by Simon, together with Pasig City Sr. Supt. Ernesto Carandang and Calixto Supt. Alanis Bautista.

The cities of Pasig, Marikina and Antipolo City, and the towns of Cainta share jurisdiction over the highway.

Overlapping territories are no help for robbery victims who do not know where to ask for help.

A Cainta police station at the back of Sta. Lucia Mall is the closest police outpost, and a National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force checkpoint is nearby.

Ideally, each town or city covering a portion of the Highway should have a checkpoint, according to Rojas.

World's quickest 'relief' caught on camera

By Tarra Quismundo

THE ill-use employee must have wanted to avoid leave privileges.

The National Bureau of Investigation said that, per the video camera outside the ladies' room on the fifth floor of the bureau building, the personnel reported at planting the fake certificates of canvass (COCs) and statements of votes (SoVs) found in the toilet on May 17 had taken only 32 seconds to use the facilities.

Isabel Vasquez was captured on the building's security video as the last person to enter the women's fifth-floor restroom before the fake documents were discovered. This was at exactly 9:32:37 a.m.

On the video, Vasquez was seen entering, seen paper in her left hand. At the time, she had just come from the office of Sen. Edgardo Angara, one of the items she regularly cleaned, according to the NBI.

Vasquez was then seen by the same fired citizens walking in the fifth-floor lobby. She vanish from the video at 9:34:00, a difference of 20 seconds.

"She said she went inside to pee. But can a woman pee in such a short a time? That is not in accord with human nature and experience," said Rolando Diaz, NBI Intelligence Division chief and a member of the investigating team.

Director operator Charito Lacdao found the envelopes containing the fake COCs and SoVs at 9:35 a.m. in the same restroom.

Special Investigator Saul Tejano said Vasquez told probers she got the papers she was seen carrying, purportedly a tabloid newspaper, from the fifth-floor lobby. But the video showed that she was already carrying the papers after she came out of Angara's fifth-floor office and before she got to the lobby.

The security camera in the fourth-floor hallway then caught a woman, with the same build and appearance as Vasquez, coming out of the floor's stairwell at 9:51:17 a.m.

Vasquez denied being the same woman. Another employee contaminating fake Comelec documents were also found in the stairwell.

Joan Manuel, the security guard who found another set of fake COCs and SoVs on the third floor of the bureau building, failed to appear at the NBI. His agency said he was on sick leave.

"We are going to look into the records of these employees... where they came in, where they come from," said NBI Deputy Director Pidoy Palce.

Palce said Diaz and Tejano were also found on June 3 outside the plenary hall of the House of Representatives building in Quezon City.

PCGG commissioner quits

By Luige del Puerto

A COMMISSIONER of the Philippine Commission on Good Government (PCGG) has chosen to give up her post to go back to teaching, the anti-graft body announced yesterday.

Commissioner Merceditas A. Arena said she opted to return to the University of the Philippines College of Law to teach, for a bigger take-home pay.

The Inquirer tried several times but failed to reach Arena, but colleagues helped us piece Arena's decision.

"She has to make a choice, and she chose to go back to the university," Commissioner Ves Gatmaitan said over the phone.

Aquino explained that Arena was only on "secondment" to the Commission, and is on an assignment means to temporarily loan a state agency for another government agency.

Arena has taken a leave from her full-time job at UP when she was appointed commissioner in June 2001.

Group threatens to sue GMA over Palawan gas share

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY — A civil society group here has threatened to file an impeachment case against President Macapagal-Arroyo for allegedly releasing P600 million in financial assistance to Palawan province without concurrence from Congress.

The Alliance Love Malampaya, backed by Church leaders, was lawyers from the University of the Philippines and a former local government secretary, said it would file the cases against the Macapagal and the national government for allegedly taking the P600 million from the share of the national government in the Malampaya natural gas project in northern Palawan.

Harry Roque, a UP law professor, said the President could be impeached for ordering the fund release in an executive order, which he said was a gross violation of the Constitution because the allocation of funds was the sole function of Congress.

The IGM yesterday presented at a press conference Roque, Raquel Baguio, another law professor, and Cesar Sarino, a former interior secretary of the Ramos administration.

IGM founder Gerry Ortega said the three will be helping the group in filing the cases against Ms Macapagal-Arroyo. PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Supreme Court Doctrines

GRAVE GUILT — Elements of falsification of public documents through an untruthful statement of facts.—Under Article 171, paragraph 4 of the Revised Penal Code, the elements of falsification of public documents through an untruthful narration of facts are: (a) the offender makes a untruthful statement in a narration of facts; (b) the offender has a legal obligation to disclose the truth of the facts narrated; (c) the facts narrated by the offender are absolutely false; and (d) the perversion of truth in the narration of facts was made with the wrongful intent to injure a third person. As the Ombudsman correctly pointed out, Ramoneta failed at point in any law imposing upon her the legal obligation to disclose where he was going to spend his hours of absence. "Legal obligation" means that there is a law requiring the disclosure of the truth of the facts narrated. Ramoneta may not be convicted of the crime of falsification of public documents by making false statements in a narration of facts absent any legal obligation to disclose where he would spend his vacation leave and travel leave. (Ombudsman vs. Ramoneta, G.R. No. 140370, January 13, 2004)

— By E. D. Vera

The Daily Gospel

Friday, June 11, 2004
St. Barnabas, Apostle

1st Reading: Acts 11:21-26; 13:1-3
Gospel: Mt 10:7-13

Jesus said to his disciples, "Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift. Do not carry any gold, silver or copper in your purses. Do not carry a traveler's bag, or an extra shirt, or sandals, or walking stick: workers deserve their living.

"When you come to a town or a village, look for a worthy person and stay there until you leave.

"As you enter the house, wish it peace. If the people in the house deserve it, your peace will be on them; if they do not deserve it, your blessing will come back to you."

Commentary:

Money, a bag, an extra shirt... These things are for my future needs. I suppose it always be the future. In the present it's only a burden; we carry the burden for the sake of the future. In many baggage until one day it is no less, to some degree, in the future. The same is true of money: my hunger may be satisfied now, but I take money until we so that I can satisfy it tomorrow.

It's a smart criticism to be told that you are living in the past. But arrogantly we think it's the highest praise to be told that you are living in the future. It's hard to see why we make such a difference between these, for one is just as unreal as the other. I know a businessman who always went about with a briefcase packed for travel, as insisted was he with the work. But one of his friends observed that just as his outside "home of no about an inches of life by living in the past, the rest of us don't do by living in the future (Courageous, Moore) Many people almost kill themselves amassing wealth, cure in their old age they still want to be earning a profit. It's an endless deferral of life. But the Gospel challenges us to live it now or never.

(Scripture Publications Inc., 8 Mayon St., FF Village, Bifiones, Quezon City, CPO Box 6, Bifiones, 1401 Quezon City, tel. 822-3000, fax 823-7020, E-mail: pub@cbcpnet.org, Website: http://www.bibleinfo.org (Catholic Publications Inc.) © http://www.catholic.org (Catholics in the Philippines)

A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

NEW

Losartan*

50mg Tablet

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE

₱20.20

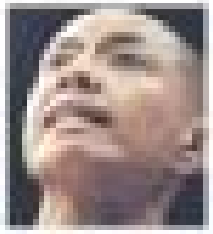
* This drug is approved for sale by BFAD as a prescription drug and should be bought only with a doctor's prescription. Ask your doctor for advice.

theraphama

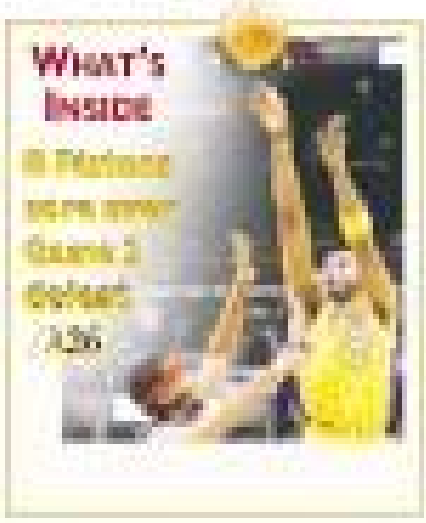
PBA officiating sucks–Guiao

By Jane Nicanor

RED Bull Barako head Yeng Guiao blasted San Miguel Beer in the rest of the PBA Fiesta Conference quarterfinals but Yeng Guiao looked anything but satisfied.



SUMIO Pamparanda



The WORLD

Ellen Lawrence B. Garcia

G8 adopts US-backed Mideast roadmap

SAVANNAH, Georgia—World leaders at the Group of Eight summit Wednesday highlighted the importance of Israeli-Palestinian peace in Middle East reform efforts but offered no new ideas on ending the conflict as they endorsed a US plan to promote change in the region.

Instead G8 leaders stressed backing for economic, political and social liberalization in the Middle East and North Africa would not detract from their determination to seek a resolution to the crisis.

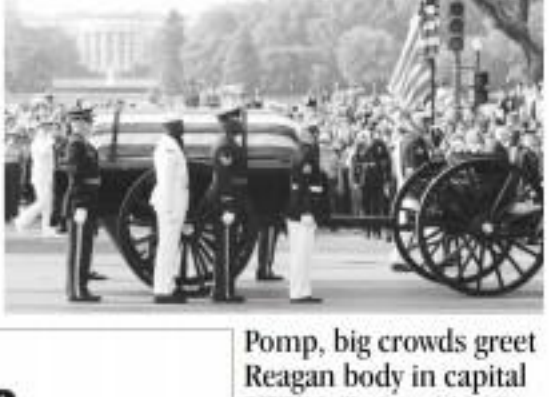
"Our support for reform in the region will go hand in hand with and support for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict," the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States said in a joint statement.

As such, the initiative—a watered-down version of an earlier highly controversial proposal—reflected deep-seated concerns of many Arabs, Muslims and Europeans by prominently mentioning peace as a catalyst for reform.

But at the same time, it maintained that the lack of a settlement cannot be an excuse for inaction. Nor should reform be stalled by the unstable situation in Iraq either, it said.

Although US officials hailed the endorsement as show of the developed world's commitment to Middle East peace and reform, some G8 leaders and delegations expressed deep skepticism about US President George W. Bush's hopes to democratize the region.

Thus, along with many Arab and Muslim leaders, including six who attended a yearlong hiatus at the current site, reportedly wanted that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iraq is entirely tied to reform. AFP



A US military honor guard accompanies the casket of former US President Ronald Reagan on a horse-drawn caisson as the start of a procession in front of the White House on Constitution Avenue, June 9, in Washington, D.C. Reagan's remains will lie in state in the US Capitol following the first state funeral in Washington in 21 years. AFP

to all our customers

Because of changes in the generation cost, electricity rates have to be adjusted correspondingly.

Just like in any business, the price of the product or service being offered has to reasonably cover the expenses incurred.

We hope you understand.

Because of adjustments in the generation cost charged by Napocor and the independent power producers, Meralco has to correspondingly adjust its rates. The said adjustment, which is **revenue-neutral to Meralco is merely a cost-recovery mechanism.** The adjustment to be implemented starting June 2004 will be 13.27 centavos per kWh for commercial and industrial customers and 10 centavos per kWh for residential customers. A lower rate adjustment will be applied, though, to residential customers consuming 100 kWh or less per month, taking lifeline discounts into account.

This rate adjustment has been approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

The following table presents the effect of the adjustment on the different consumption levels:

number of customers			total bill			peso per kWh			
kWh	(Apr 2004)	% of Total	May-04	Jun-04	Increase	May-04	Jun-04	Increase	% Incr
50	140,133	14.5%	118.84	119.75	1.01	2.34	2.38	0.04	1.6%
70	281,808	7.5%	227.80	231.77	3.97	3.23	3.31	0.08	1.7%
100	460,279	12.3%	416.70	424.41	7.71	4.17	4.24	0.08	1.9%
200	1,215,749	32.5%	1,091.06	1,111.91	20.87	5.46	5.56	0.10	1.9%
300	570,117	15.2%	1,738.48	1,769.73	31.25	5.79	5.90	0.10	1.8%
500	406,027	10.9%	3,344.09	3,396.26	52.17	6.69	6.79	0.10	1.6%
1000	190,413	5.1%	6,718.05	6,822.45	104.39	6.72	6.82	0.10	1.6%
Excess	84,312	1.7%							
Total	3,730,838	100.0%							

MERALCO
may liwanag ang buhay

Pomp, big crowds greet Reagan body in capital

WASHINGTON—Ronald Reagan's body rode in solemn procession through the US capital on Wednesday, saluted by thousands of people who came to pay tribute to the former president, transformed by time from partisan political warrior to national hero.

The body of the eternally debt-president was carried slowly on a horse-drawn caisson, a traditional military wagon, down Constitution Avenue to the US Capitol, where it was to lie in state for 34 hours. It was followed by a riderless black horse, with a pair of Reagan's favorite boots turned backward in the stirrups, symbolizing the death of a military leader.

Military jets swooped low over the procession and drums rolled as the mourning procession passed down the 2-km route. Staff with thousands of onlookers who defied the intense heat and humidity to pay tribute to Reagan.

Nancy

People lining the road applauded and cheered Reagan's 93-year-old widow, Nancy, as she left her limousine at one point on the route to watch the coffin placed on the military wagon.

The 40-strong former First Lady leaned for support on the arm of a military officer and waved to the crowd, acknowledging the applause.

Reagan's, who died on Saturday aged 93 after a 10-year struggle with Alzheimer's disease, had lain in repose at his presidential library at Simi Valley near Los Angeles for a day and a half before being flown to Washington.

US media provided blanket coverage and glowing assessments of the historical legacy and canny personality of the former movie actor who has been lionized by some as one of the most significant US presidents of the 20th century.

After Friday's funeral service at Washington National Cathedral, the coffin will be flown back to Los Angeles for a state-funeral on the grounds of his presidential library.

21-gun salute

Many onlookers waved US flags and many cried as the procession passed.

At the Capitol, there was a 21-gun salute as the coffin was ushered into the spot where Reagan was sworn into office as president in January 1981. An honor guard escorted a carefully up the steep white marble steps into the building.

A band played the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," a favorite of President Abraham Lincoln, the first US president to lie in state under the Capitol dome.

Before the public was admitted, Vice President Dick Cheney and Republican congressional leaders spoke at a closed ceremony. "It was the vision and will of Ronald Reagan that gave hope to the oppressed, shamed the oppressors and ended an 'Evil Empire'," Cheney said, referring to the former Soviet Union.

Thousands, sweeping for eyewitness in shock, drew her hand along the edge of the casket before withdrawing from the chamber.

Thatcher

After the service, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney were taking the first to pay respects to the late president. Thatcher paused and gently touched the flag draped coffin.

An estimated 2,000 people were filing past Reagan's casket during the overnight public viewing in the rotunda.

Many past and present world leaders and veterans of the Cold War struggle against communism were making their way to Washington for Friday's funeral service.

They included former Soviet communist leader Mikhail Gorbachev, formally representing Russia, and Thatcher, a staunch Reagan ally in the struggle against communism.

Reagan's death unleashed an outpouring of public affection for a president who was often seen as a sharply divisive figure during his eight years in office, between 1981 and 1989.

"To Americans, Ronald Reagan was the best friend of president we've had," said Amy Weaver, 55, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who waited under the hot sun for the procession to pass. "I loved him in the movies, and when he was running the president—and after!"

Planned in advance

The elaborate symbolism and pageantry of the week of mourning, orchestrated according to plans drawn up long in advance by the Reagan family, seemed fitting for a man whose public skills were first honed as a Hollywood movie star.

Opponents were frustrated that none of the scandals of those years seemed to stick to Reagan and dubbed him the "Teflon president."

Reuters

Officiating sucks, says coach Guiao

Front page 4/4

Beermen on Wednesday evening.

The Red Bull coach took a technical and was thrown out after Guiao swung his arm in a gesture of dismay and accidentally hit referee Rongy Arda- ño as they argued over a foul called on Ronjo Villanueva.

Before leaving the court, Guiao stood for a couple of minutes on the floor, not trying to assess the situation, before heading straight to the press room.

"We just outplayed this with the referees not calling again. It's a pity that the referees are taking away all the basics of how that we put in the game. This is not the first time and I'm not the first coach. We're all singing the same tune," said Guiao, who was nominated by Commissioner Noli Eala to his office today.

Guiao's outburst came on the heels of coach Alfrancis Chua's rant over officiating during Sta. Lucia Realty's losing effort against Barangay Ginebra in the wildcard playoffs last Sunday.

Guiao, the newly elected vice governor of Pampanga, together with Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio also had a brush with the league's beleaguered officials recently when their respective game-time referee-in-charge reminded us a result, they said, of faulty officiating.

Both coaches were fined P20,000 after Eala declared their tirades against officiating as unusual to the league.

"I think the officiating sucks. It hasn't been any better with all the complaints, with all the suspensions and with all the fines," cried Guiao. "I guess tomorrow

GALEN! Timing of Alaska and Mark Caguioa of Shell is a match for the boot-ballin' Wednesday's game won by the Gin Kings, 80-71. ALVIN BALTAZAR

has to say something and take responsibility. That's only a certain point up to which you can hold your tongue, especially when you see your team into the gift and you are then to this.

"Somebody has to be responsible all the way to the top. They're PBA officials not making any statements. They're trying to make it look bush."

Guiao said he outquestioned with Chua, who also has fallen afoul recently against the technical and game officials.

"I understand coach Al (Chua). Sta. Lucia Realty won't play for the next three months and that's painful for the entire team," said Eala after the Beermen, led by Chua and team manager Arnel Ninguio, sought an audience with the commissioner Wednesday.

They were black armbands as a sign of protest.

Ironically, the new PBA chairman is Buddy Encarnado, who represents the Lanis ballet board.

Eala said most of the calls the Beermen questioned were basically judgment calls that fall within the league's guidelines on game officiating.

"I've always maintained the PBA is professional enough to admit mistakes. We have suspended and fined referees in the past because of complaints and grievances need to us. But in this particular instance, I closed find anything that would merit sanction or the referees," said Eala.

Meanwhile, the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds, retired point- day Jessi Cicanda and promised in the Beijer gym in Hiroshima cop at 1 p.m.

FED LEAGUE

Alabang up with MGC, Riviera bets

STANDINGS (As of June 10)

Group I: MGC Cross Links Alabang 2-0-1, 8-4Pts rounds; 1-0-0, Mount Hapa 1-0-1, Alabang 0-1-1

Group II: Manila Golf 2-0-0, Sembilang 1-1-0, Sta. Elena 1-1-0, Highlands 0-2-0

Group III: Riviera 2-1-0, Cavite 1-1-0, Loyola 0-0-0, Wack Wack 0-2-0

Group IV: Phoenix 2-0-0, Valley 1-1-0, Southwoods 0-1-1, Greenmeadows 0-2

CHINESE champion Alabang and former titleholders Riviera and Manila Golf opened their respective bid with strong by winning their first two ties in the Atlantic Pfizer Federation league in matches versus.

Alabang defeated MGC a 3-1 win over Nick Vilick at home then downed Mt. Malarayat by the same score in an away match to take the early lead in Group I.

After losing the crown to Alabang last year, Manila Golf served notice of its true strength by winning Wack Wack, Riviera, 2.5-1.5, before outplaying Tagaytay Highlands, 3-1, for the top spot in Group II.

Riviera, which had ruled the first three editions of the meet featuring 16 of the country's most exclusive clubs, scored big victories over Eastridge and Sherwood Hills in Group IV to also put itself among the early contenders for the quarterfinals berths.

The early Group III members were tightly contested with Mimosa leading the pack of six 3-1 win over Orchard and 3 down with Southwoods.

Orchard bounced back from the last-to upset Forest Hills, 3-2, and claim second position. Sister team Southwoods took out Forest Hills but earlier thrown last match.

Candelaria and Sta. Elena, meanwhile, are tied for second spot in Group II.

Valley is also off to a strong start in Group IV after beating Sherwood Hills and then sweeping a draw with Eastridge.

NBC Northern caging gets under way in Baguio

BAGUIO CITY—The National Basketball Conference (NBC) brings its act to this cool mountain resort today when it unwraps its Northern competition with the Baguio Cardinals facing the Batangas Tigers at the University of Baguio gym here.

Batanguenos Jose Antonio's Cardinals and the 25ers of Mahtar Mayor Tito Rivera and Bernie Mendoza square off at 4 p.m. after a 10-minute opening ceremony.

NBC president and reigning national pivotal champion Rachmund "Tar" Padilla will give an inspirational talk and make the ceremonial toss. Padilla will be assisted by NBC chair Lizzie Kilroy8 and secretary general Tito Del Mar.

Six other teams are vying in the tourney sponsored by Panorama, Spring Cooking Oil, Jolijuice Lines, PCSO, Air Philippines, Supercat, Accel, Simon's Books, Cebu, Oriental and Cagayan de Oro.

The Bulo Warriors raced to an early lead in the southern bombings by beating the CdO Stars in overtime and the Olympians Comet.

The Cardinals will battle on Jun Balanon, Joel Rosa, Oliver Sison and Bill Suer Jr.s in their battle-surprise the 25ers, who boast former ex-pros and collegiate and commercial league veterans Ralph Romey, Jimmy Mariscal, Steven Galvez, Ariel de Cantos, Joel Rosalino and Allen Patrimonio.

"The boys will fight all the way," said Cards owner Rustom Batalla and coach Hap Gravelo.

"We'll be very competitive," countered 25ers coach Nic Yonzaraw who admitted he still needs to make some minor adjustments on his team's game.

Spring Mineral Water, Distillers Lumber and Mobile.

Other NBC matches are slated for tomorrow, sponsored by Panorama, Spring Cooking Oil, Jolijuice Lines, PCSO, Air Philippines, Supercat, Accel, Simon's

Pistons sore over the one that got away

Series shifts to Detroit today

AUBURN HILLS, Michigan—One shot has drastically changed the dynamics of the NBA Finals. The question now for the Detroit Pistons is whether they'll let it affect them in Game 3 the way it did in overtime of Game 2.

Distraught and disgusted with themselves after their heartbreaking defeat, the Pistons boarded a plane and headed home immediately after Tuesday's Game 2.

But instead of returning to Motown shadrow with 1-1 tied and a superb chance to pull off one of the most stunning upsets in league history, they're tied 1-1 and wondering how they let a six-point lead slip away in the final 40 seconds.

The most pertinent question was why the Pistons didn't foul someone before Kobe Bryant hit a 3-pointer with 2.1 seconds remaining to send the game to overtime. A foul would've stopped the Lakers' star from throwing up that desperation shot, which they needed three points to tie, and the Pistons had plenty of chances to commit one before Bryant launched his shot.

"We don't foul in a situation like that," coach Larry Brown said, explaining that he feared a four-point play. "We talked about it two times inside: yeah, when Shaq gets it, put him on the line. But I don't want to take it from the shot."

Brown went on to concede the consequences of that decision and hope it doesn't ultimately cost him a chance at his third NBA championship.

One semi-shining shot was only the life-net of system, as evidenced by what happened to the Los Angeles Spurs in the second round: Derek Fisher's Game 5 buzzer-beater sewing the momentum the Lakers' way, and they finished off the Spurs in six games.

"It's devastating," said Tayshaun Prince.

"You know we're crushed," Jeremy said. "We had a winnable game. Everyone in that locker room is down."

Games 3, 4 and 5 will now played at The Palace before a sellout crowd that has created almost 15 years for its noise-o-meter to reach its max.

Game 3 is on Thursday. Pistons' morning in Detroit, Game 4 is on Sunday and Game 5 is on Tuesday before the series returns to Los Angeles—unless one of the teams wins all three games, something a home team has never done since the NBA switched to a 2-3-2 format in 1985.

Meanwhile, the Lakers are receiving injuries to two key players. Fisher is bobbing with a sore right knee and Karl Malone is nursing the sore in point 3-pointer from celebrity opponents.

Brad Miller sprained a ligament in his right knee early in Game 2.

The first two games exposed the Pistons' inevitable advantages of point guard and power forward with Chauncey Billups and Rasheed Wallace outplaying the Lakers' Gary Payton and Malone.

"It's not a good feeling for me," said Payton, who was outscored 27-2 by Billups in Game 2. "Right now I don't have a rhythm. I don't have my confidence."

TOLL Due to battle in 2 point shooter, the Pistons' Richard Hamilton (left) puts up a floor defense as the Lakers' Bryant launches the triple with 2.1 seconds to go that sent Game 2 into overtime. AP

PBL FINALS

Welcoat vs Viva: A grim dispute

By Mari Anthony Reyes

THE FINALS opens on only one thing: The PBL 2nd Unity Cup. Finals will go the distance.

After that, Philcoats Smoke and Viva Mineral Water-PEC have combining views on the championship series.

First, Welcoat coach Celso Gracia, in his first finals stint as head coach, disagreed that his team has the edge in firepower.

"We are just trying to help each other like we have our own Power Duo. We have many backs in Jet Bacosa, three-pointer in the workplace," said the unassuming 29-year-old rookie mentor, who took the reins from Leo Austria before the Unity Cup started.

"But true, said Viva coach Rey Bacosa. "In fact, I thought Welcoat is just a Choice Filipino-Asa Tangkay lama, but they have proven me wrong."

Coach could be composing a new series of plays to the limit of his vision, primarily to unwind the offensive hosts multimedia for head coach Bernardo Pilapil-Reyes.

Garcia said he's wary of Bonifacio's homecourt reputation.

But Bacosa was quick to point out that Philcoat's edition has been well in place and that Clarito has a "capable coaching staff behind him."

That brings the debate to the final point. Which has the bigger import?

"Sidecar has the players who have been to the PBA and back, and that makes a big difference when the championship pressure sets in," explained Philcoat point guard Dennis Allegion.

Bonsol countered, "On paper, we don't have that many players capable of championships. Our leadership and big-fighting issues are all we have to offset the edge they have over us."

They stop talking and settle their differences on the hardcourt tomorrow.

Matchup of opposites

TWO TRUE exact opposites. But they have points of commonality.

Viva Mineral Water-PEC's Armond Santos and Alex Tangkay of Welcoat Paints have known the key factors behind their career-defined upstarts in the 2004 PBL Unity Cup.

Santos and Tangkay are all set to organize their major roles in a main bags-of-tapes with consuming styles when the best-of-five title series from 4PM tomorrow at the Pasig Sports Center.

Santos, a 6-foot-4 forward and reigning Unity Cup co-most valuable player, is set to step up his double-double figures. He's set as a threshold force in the free block to be makes 40.5/7 percent of his shots and hits a high 62.5% percent from three-point range, averaging 4.3 triples.

Tangkay, on the other hand, has earned most of the load for the Royal Masters this season.

With an 18.6 time/g coming at 14.4% —third in the league— he's unconditional Federal Territory as to the PBL MVP race.

Tough course awaits SEA mountainbikers

BAHAO CITY, Cebu—The 68 participants from 11 countries face a very challenging course when the Southeast Asian Mountainbike Championships kicks off today.

Sponsored after the Asian Cup in Germany, the race makes through several very downhill routes and will start and end at the Ramon Durano II Stadium.

"The race course design is considerable. I'm sure foreign bikers will find our trails quite challenging," said Ismael Gay queen commission chief Irene Rodriguez.

Indonesia's SEA Games women's champion Ina Sinaurey, who will face Filipina Marites Bilil in a rematch of their duel in Vietnam last December, is not sure if she'll be ready.

Sinaurey said she's not in top condition because of a recent bout with dengue fever.

Cycling Confederation of the Philippines president Delia Dandoy Singh, PhilCycling president Bert Lina, POC president Celso Dauth, Philippine Sports Commission chairman Richie Bebias, Rep. Joseph Abaya Durano and Durano Mayor Ramon Durano III will attend the opening rites.

Lady Archers too much for SSC

Lorenzo Sunday, Lorenzo Ajayu
4 p.m.—220480 vs 897
Vol. 6—vs Editors (cbs)

By Trina Rueda

SENSATIVE Khadilla Santos came up with the big points as De La Salle soared to its fourth straight win yesterday with a 25-22, 20-18, 20-20 pasting of San Sebastian in the Shakey's V-League volleyball tournament at the Ateneo Gym.

The 5-foot-8 Santos, a 16-year-old biomass management junior, attended the Lady Archers' front line with nine straight attacks as La Salle erased a 17-16 deficit in the last set for the win.

The Lady Archers, who lost in their debut to pacesetting University of Santo Tomas 14-15, pleased a second loss to clear games to the Lady Stags.

"We should throw the kind of game that people expect us to play," said coach Rodel de Jesus, who steered La Salle to the UNAP title last year.

Bulls May Stories led Far Eastern University's attack as the Lady Tams beat Letrán, 25-23, 20-11, 25-14, to sweep their season at 1-3 in the second game.

The Passion

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendiola

PEOPLE, where do I begin?

OK, I mean, about Detroit losing a 6-point lead with 40 seconds left to Game 2 on Wednesday of the Detroit-Los Angeles best-of-seven series for the NBA championship.

Huge as it was for the Lakers, who went on to win the game in overtime, their victory from both their history-filled meeting. If they cried a river, I won't be surprised.

Look, it was a no-game for Detroit star Ben Wallace. Rasheed Wallace sank a three with 2.1 left to tie that lead the game in 80. His teammate, Bryant couldn't put his out missed. He wrapped up with Shaquille O'Neal in a blinding 10-2 blast to force a 1-1 series deadlock. They headed for me today in Auburn Hills, Michigan—the first of three games set at Detroit's The Palace.

Now did Lakers coach Phil Jackson decide Kobe Bryant's injury?

"We always believe that Kobe can make miracle shots even when things are not going well for him," he said. "He just made a great shot."

It happens all the time in the NBA, one team ahead all set to win only to lose in the end. In a snap, an opera to confusion. My heart's still bleeding for Detroit.

Speaks to said that almost always, it can pass life. One great shot and there it, Hooray! Maybe. But when it happens, you are numbed by its impact. You are speechless.

Nature, indeed, has its own cruel way with humans.

And when you think you already have seen it all, you're surprised. And you—things would suddenly go away like a soap bubble. It just suddenly hasn't with out warning.

Which brings me back again to that horrifying way Shell had absorbed over Detroit back. Very similar to the Detroit thing.

It all for suddenly appeared as though it was a stroll in the park for the Tar Heels against their hosts, Iowa St. by by 23 points Force, no one thought Shell would still lose to Rod Shell.

But it did.

It's a painful point.

As fast as Shell built double-digit margins, it would seem on those leads crunch to a blur.

The night was ghastly enough like a birthday cake getting nibbled away by a battalion of ants when nobody's looking.

Shell still had a big 17-point, 71-54 lead over Rod Shell with one quarter left. It turns up to 19 points, 76-56. But after Rick Mount jumped for a 78-60 Shell lead...still a huge margin, I must insist, for Shell to close the game button—things turned in unobvious to close.

It 13-0 by Gary Payton and by Vinny Thomas dashed Shell's hail to Iowa, 71-74.

After Gia Cologne made a 10-71 for Shell, Samuel Watkins, Shell's rescuing major, took his sixth foul off Thomas, who split his shot into.

Nothing! departure hurt Shell in there was still 2:04 left in the game. Shell had been surely winning for a legitimate bowl game for many seasons to come.

But enough as, after Thomas had missed his second freethrow, Rod Bell grabbed the rebound and cued Rod Thomas driving a staple.

And because Shell's losing kicked character and experience suitably because it has not engaging at least a couple of very. Did Ames on some more—the Tar Heels largely penalized, Lynchburg and one can infer that it hardly needed for it to score seemingly figure prominently in every tournament, Shell would surely celebrate like we simply each.

It still had a chance to pull the game out of the fire after Pete Both (14 at rebounds) a Sunday Valentine's Bonds (11 at free throws to give Shell an 82-79 margin, 10-second left.

But after a "Bing Dunn; Red Bull timeout. Thomas wound quickly from under, running a lead from Billy Mustard that put Shell in penalty.

Alas, when Thomas missed his charity, Valentine's, the smallest Bonds on the floor, surged the rebound. And there, because of bonus, Dirk Cox committed the foul of the season that sent Valentine to the line. It was the point that Shell's Bonds, right, if not the tournament, coming in it did when Valentine's team running for a shot. When Valentine's took both freethrows for an 83-82 Red Bull lead, time down to 0:7 seconds, it was all over but the whining. Shell completed its collapse by hastily missing the last two tries of the game—both potential game-winners.

The Detroit loss to Los Angeles was not in debilitating as Shell's collapse. In a way, the least, since the Mike Finals is that early two games did. But Shell losing to Red Bull was The Passion of the season, if it's any consolation, the defeats gave Shell an extended vacation stretching up to October.

But who needs a vacation to draw close wins?

It doesn't even mend the Barbed dangers ous to a Jumpsuit's Bloodsprung Talent.

BATTERIES. My family and I conclude with the wood cases left behind by Rick Pillstone, the golf great who passed away on Wednesday, June 9. It was only a few weeks back when Dad and I, together with John Aprons, Rod Bilbolero and Lucas Fernandez, had some at our tee-center house in Rockwell Power Plant in Makati. Even as we knew from that 20th shot at the 19th hole, we knew we were witnessing very "wine and roses" for Dick that evening. "I have some bets, so look, I'm still very much around can't you see?" Dick had said a number of times that night. We believed him. Dick, like Wyatt Earp, was an absolute fighter. He battled his way to 146 wins and 62 champion titles. Even with all of a hospital in San Francisco with an adenocarcinoma could steer game of his employ- ment. He retired for it at Los- ide Guadalupe. Then all he missed. Dick

11 Chinese workers shot dead in Afghanistan

KABUL—At least 11 Chinese construction workers were shot dead Thursday when gunmen launched a night-time raid on their compound in northeastern Afghanistan, Chinese officials said.

A spokesperson for Swiss-led international peacekeepers, who have a small base in the northern town of Konduz, said 16 people were also injured in the attack.

Up to 20 armed men stormed the site south of Konduz and opened fire in what the Chinese Embassy described as a "terrorist attack."

"Eleven people were killed this morning in Konduz," the Chinese official, who gave her name as Ms. Yan, said. "They were killed by terrorists."

She said the gunmen attacked at 3 a.m., while China's official Xinhua news agency said security guards arrested five. It was not clear if any of the attackers were killed or injured.

The Chinese Embassy and the victims were among 100 people working on the construction of a road for the China Railway Construction Shanjie Group Corp. Many of the workers only arrived in Afghanistan in the past week.

China's ambassador to Afghanistan fear "first was heading to the scene, some 250 km north of the capital, an official at the embassy, who did not want to give his name, said.

It was not clear what had prompted the attack or the site some 30 km south of Konduz, he added.

Northern Afghanistan is considered one of the most stable areas of the country with militants more active in the south and southeast, the strongholds of the former Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime.

Konduz is seen as a particularly safe area of Afghanistan as some 200 German peacekeepers are based in the town. The International Security Assistance Force soldiers had provided some blood for transfusions for the injured, who had been taken to a hospital in the city, a spokesperson for the peacekeepers said.

The attack follows a spate of attacks targeting aid workers and foreigners by rebels in the province's former Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime aimed at disrupting planned national elections in September.

Just seven weeks ago, three Americans and two Afghans working for Medecins Sans Frontieres were shot dead as they traveled to northwestern Badghis province by unarmed Taliban, prompting fears that militants had marked out of their traditional areas ahead of the elections.

The country has also witnessed a new upsurge in fighting between US-led forces and supporters of the Taliban, which was ousted by US-backed Afghan forces in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In the past week some 70 rampaged Taliban have been killed in fight ing on the ground and in US bombing raids in the southern Taliban heartland. AFP

Gadhafi planned slay of Saudi ruler, say suspects nabbed in US

WASHINGTON—Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi last year planned to have the ruler of Saudi Arabia assassinated, according to two alleged members of the conspiracy under arrest in the United States and Saudi Arabia, The New York Times said Thursday.

The murder plot, involving living residents as Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz's motorcade, is being investigated by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Britain, the paper said, knowledgeable of the case told the daily.

If the conspiracy turns out to be true it could undermine Gadhafi's efforts to clean up his image and his public pledges that his government has renounced terrorism.

A senior Bush administration official told the daily that the emergence of contributing evidence that Gadhafi ordered or condoned an assassination and terror campaign could cause a "180-degree" change of American policy toward Libya.

US officials said the investigation of the alleged assassination plot to date centers only Libya has not yet identified from a FBI counterdepartment list of countries that support terrorism.

Interviewed in London, the Libyan leader's son Seif al-Islam el-Gadhafi described the reported plot as "ridiculous."

He said the two suspects' statements appear to be credible enough for the United States to have launched an investigation.

Alexandrina Miranda, an American Muslim arrested in October for violating a US ban on travel to Libya, described in a plea agreement how his visit twice with Gadhafi in June and August of 2003 to discuss details of the assassination.

Although, the US officials said, told US investigators that Gadhafi at one point had summoned "I want the Crown Prince killed" through a coup.

Separately, in Saudi Arabia, Col. Mohamed Ismail, described as a Libyan intelligence officer captured by Egyptian police in Montenegro after he fled Saudi Arabia where he tried to pay off four Saudi militants who were preparing to assassinate the Saudi monarch, told his Saudi interrogators by new operational commander of the plot.

Ismail named two Libyan intelligence chiefs who reported directly to Gadhafi as giving him instructions on the assassination plot.

As part of the conspiracy, Al-Ismail said himself traveled to London to contact Saudi dissidents through whom they could wreak millionaire in Saudi Arabia to carry out the assassination plan.

They distributed more than $ 2 million in the to the dissidents, according to the account of their statements, the daily said. AFP

THE GANG ARE HERE: Goofy and Pluto unfazed by Disney legend, Donald Duck, pose for a photo on his 70th birthday at Disneyland Paris in Marne La Vallee, France, June 9. AP

Donald, famous lisping Duck, hits 70 in style

LOS ANGELES—It's a big day for the world's best-known lisping swindler. Donald Duck turned 70 Wednesday.

Disney will mark Donald's seven decade career achievement with festivities at its parks around the globe.

"This is a duck with one short fuse and an amazing (if somewhat glib) command of language, and when things don't go right, he goes ballistic," Donald's Disney history explains. But "Donald Duck has a good heart and always has good intentions. Well, almost always."

Immortalized in 128 cartoons, and an inexhaustible front desk to clothes to books, Donald does not look his age.

But the same white duck with outsized eyes, a golden beak and a disposition on the cranky side have been one of Disney's most enduring creations since his first appearance on June 9, 1934 in an animated cartoon called "The Wise Little Hen."

Like his 75-year-old friend Mickey Mouse, Donald's classic characters, in trademark navy sailor's hat, red bowtie and blue shirt, arguably has been a bit overlooked in recent years, overshadowed by computer-animated citizens such as Nemo the size-challenged and Shrek the ogre, pictured by rival Disney-unique movie Dreamworks. AFP

Sex seen more likely when women are most fertile

LONDON—Planters are likely to have more sex on the days when they are most fertile, even if they aren't trying to get pregnant, scientists said on Thursday.

That means that taking a chance and having sex without using contraception could be more likely to result in unwanted pregnancies than previously thought.

"Those apparently are biological factors promoting intercourse during a woman's six fertile days, whether she wants a baby or not," said Prof. Allen Wilcox, of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Durham, North Carolina.

But he and his colleagues do not understand the reasons and doubt that women are even aware of them.

In a study of 68 women who recorded when they had sex over a three-month period, Wilcox and his colleagues discovered that during ovulation, when a woman is most likely to become pregnant, the overall frequency of sex increased by 24 percent. Reuters

EXTRAORDINARY
Waris Dirie from Somalia smiles after receiving the 'World Social Award' at the Women's World Awards gala in Hamburg, Germany June 9. The Women's World Awards are presented for the first time this year to extraordinary women in 12 different categories. REUTERS

Paris a suicide attack target, says report

MILAN—A group of suspected Islamic militants arrested in Italy and Belgium appeared to have been planning a suicide attack in Paris, according to an Italian detention warrant seen by Reuters on Wednesday.

But France's interior ministry said the information was too sparse to prove an attack was being prepared.

Italian police late on Monday arrested Sabri Essaies (aged thirty), known as "Ahmed the Egyptian" and suspected of playing a lead role in the Madrid train bombings that killed 191 people in March. A second man was arrested as part of the raid.

Belgian police, acting on information from Italy, then arrested 15 people they said were preparing for an attack.

The 27-page warrant includes transcribed telephone conversations in which the suspects discussed the Paris metro's security arrangements and a "martyr" referred to as Abdelsamad.

"In the most likely event, the evil Abdelsamad just (strike) was ready to leave Brussels for Iraq bearing out suicide attacks," an Italian judicial source said.

"Reading the transcripts of the taped calls included in the investigation, it seems there was a second cell which was ready to strike on French territory." Reuters

Gene research could be used for war, terror, experts warn

STOCKHOLM—Biotechnology research used to find new cures for disease could instead be harnessed for use as a weapon of terror, a prominent European think-tank warned.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in its annual yearbook, said that biotechnology, including advancements in mapping the human genome, could result in new biological weapons that could cause harm to a specific ethnic group or a large mankind economic population.

"The fear is not merely genetic engineers does by the human genome and a large number of other genomes, including for pathogenic microorganisms, is a great scientific resource, but it could pose a significant threat if misused," said the report coauthor Stockholm Biochemistry.

Researcher Rolfand Guthrie said developments in mapping the human genome, which could lead to improved medicines and vaccines for heart and neurological problems, also could be used by terrorists.

"There have been numerous claims that al-Qaeda or the Taliban have demonstrated an interest in acquiring and using biological weapons, but such reports are ambiguous," the report's author, Roger Bolling wrote. Experts said the risk is there.

Last year, the National Research Council called for more oversight over biotechnology, in part to permit the continued study of cutting-edge medicine and to keep development in the academic and medical realm.

The issue left for Stockholm, and Barbara Rosenberg, chair of the Materials Working Group on Biological and Chemical Weapons at the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation.

She said research of the human genome, and mapping it extensively, could result in one group being able to develop a pathogen that would target a specific ethnic group.

"Even though no populations are pure, there are groups that share a relative number of certain genes that are missing in other people," she said. "There could be some selective use, it wouldn't be perfect, but even if it only attacked a fairly small percentage of the population it could still cause major disruption to society." AP

INQUIRER

OPINION

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Worse than polio

IN A previous editorial right after the May 10 elections, we noted that the election of Ms. Gracia Cielo Padaca as governor of Isabela represented a sea change in dynastic politics that has put a stranglehold on much of the country's political life for generations now. We spoke too soon. Because since then, Padaca, although the clear winner of the election, had to fight for her right to be proclaimed as winner despite mumbling

EDITORIAL blocks and dilatory tactics from the camp of gubernatorial loser Faustino Dy Jr. who, by the way, he was masterfully maneuvering to effect the post-election standoff, looks like the winner.

Like the political opposition that is raising every sort of objection and is filibustering in footage the canvassing in Congress and to delay the proclamation of the presidential winner, Dy appears to gain ice in shutting out Padaca from her rightful proclamation. First, he accused Padaca of tampering records and thus during the election. Second, he charged that she had allied with the New People's Army in robbing him of his reelection. And third, he expressed fear for his life, suggesting that Padaca and the NPA were out to assassinate him.

All of the charges are laughable. Dy belongs to the political dynasty that had headed it even Isabela without interruption for 40 years. Until May 10 and, it seems, even after that day, he was firmly entrenched in power. Considering the Dy clout's might and power, Padaca, a political novice, looks puny and powerless. Most important, Padaca is a public servant. Case beside her figure—no crutches and no limping. But with grit and determination—Dy looks dumb, hysterical and overactive.

But even perhaps more laughable was Comelec's apparent move to oblige Dy's histrionics. In a decision that stunned even Comelec sidelines, Commissioners Rufino Javier and Virgilio Garcillano issued a temporary restraining order to stop Padaca's proclamation after Dy filed a petition accusing her of communist links and alleged terrorism and massive cheating. With guys like Javier and Garcillano in the Comelec, who needs clowns?

The Comelec circus, whether slapstick or shrewdly engineered, should buttress Padaca's claim that powerful forces are always out to undermine the people's will. She knows that she might have won with a commanding margin of 80,000 votes against Dy, but her proclamation is another matter. She knows that she will have to fight every inch of the way to the provincial capitol, that the Dys wouldn't surrender their 40-year-old stranglehold with not a fight, and a dirty one at this, it seems.

The Padaca episode reveals three things. First, it shows that political dynasties will resort to every means, whether legitimate or underhanded, to perpetuate themselves in power, even co-opt certain democratic institutions, such as the press and the Comelec, to stifle a blow against aristocracy itself. To be sure, it is pretty obvious that the Dys have been raising the wobbly issues against Padaca in order to portray the election as a mess, one that was characterized by fraud and terrorism, exactly to compel the Comelec to declare a failure of elections and thus, stop Padaca from taking her seat.

Second, certain democratic institutions, even something as important as a constitutional body like the Comelec, are not immune from the wiles and promises of powerful class and partisan sectors that govern against truly democratic and fairness. In this case, this episode should show that we must not let democratic institutions, political parties, which is inherently anti-democracy.

And third, against our earlier editorial, it seems that there has been no sea change in the part of Dy, the series of the Comelec, and the overall incapacity of our democratic institutions to act intentionally and swiftly to implement the people's will because elite interests are involved should show that our democracy may be a sham. Our democracy has suffered a fate worse than polio.

Distressful

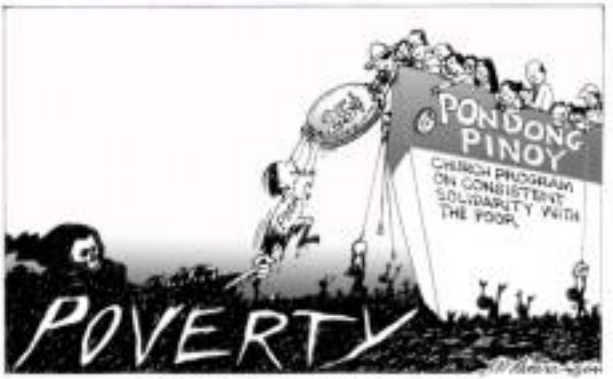
THE SUCCESSFUL series talks on Irish Ambassador was a curious blow to the ashes Irish accurately whose inability to understand its own background from somewhere not again evident. For

FOREIGN COMMENT

the Donald Horan, the situation is about to be solved.

Washington resumed a strong threshold in the oil-producing country. But the war is long unsustainable as have increased recklessness in Israeli hobbies. And Iraq's own domestic situation remains enormously shaky. Most importantly, there is no confidence that the United States is able to control this increasingly complicated situation in the Middle East.

Washington Ambassador (Bethesda, Maryland)



Laughter, the best medicine

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE BIBLE says President Donald Reagan that I like to remember here is not that of the leader of the most powerful nation in the world but of the handsome young actor with the winsome crooked smile in silent early Hollywood B-movies. He usually played a supporting role to a star duo during leading roles. In the Flynn in youth, cowboy and war movies. But one in the picture and troubleshooting films that Flynn was always in. Actress Lee Lee said in "Then Until Wish There Came Cat" and "Desperate Journey" Reagan already had his trademark pompadour then, which he never discarded until he died.

He had leading roles in dramatic parts, but he was not so dashing, handsome and debonair as in Errol Flynn's films. Reagan's other role as a Notre Dame coach, to carry either and a World War II soldier usually appearing in the effigy of Flynn role when he was or just in Errol Flynn's films. And when in the movie "St. John's film last there. It's an ace incident, he played the villain in the movie version of Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers," which was expanded because the story was too short for a full-length movie. I am very happy to see the death of people out there who were not so free when the Flynn-Reagan movies were showing. Most of them now thought only when he was a movie star. Reagan's "Then Until Wish There" of California, and president of the United States.) The best memories should there some of his old movies if they can find copies.

Unfortunately, Reagan is one of the three least American presidents—not only because of his political links but also because he published an essay out of an economic depression is a spread of prosperity with his "supply-side economics," aptly dubbed "Reaganomics." Some Filipinos started losing him only because he became too friendly with the late Ferdinand Marcos despite the personal love. Boot Boston, the person that Ferdinand and Imelda favored entertained even him on the other side of the world.

* * *

Here's good news for fans. Robert Ruffner, Gov. Antonino Eu and other fours in the industry have come up with a plan to help them have a sense of humor. It's good for your health. Instead of being depressed, brooding and angry for losing—as if you prefer, being "cheated"—laugh at yourself for being nearly a loser, and especially in the candidacy who lost to you, for not realizing what he or she is getting himself into. After all, it would be less or her who would be buried up to his/her neck in a barn of hard-to-suffer problems while you, the lucky winner, would be happily frolicking and cavorting from the sidelines.

I'm not kidding, I'm serious. In the current issue of the Reader's Digest, there is an article, by Marilynn Preston, on "Laughter: Best Medicine," and there is scientific evidence to prove it. I'm summarizing that article here for the benefit of those who are ill or a bonds. "Studies have suggested," the Digest said, "that humor can alleviate allergy symptoms, increase pain tolerance, bolster the disease-fighting immune system, reduce the risk of stroke and heart attack—and even help diabetics control their blood sugar."

The author learned after the publication in 1979 of a book, "Anatomy of an Illness" by Norman Cousins, whose he learned how he battled a painful and crippling arthritic disease not with a sleep regimen but with large doses of humor. He reasoned: "If laughter is the best medicine, I should have a real good time in bed." And he did, by watching old movies of Laurel and Hardy and Marx Brothers.

"I made the joyous discovery that 10 minutes of genuine belly laughter Cousins wrote, "had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep."

The Digest article said "Scientific studies followed in the book's wake and corroborated much of what Cousins wrote in suggesting that notion that humor does a body good—in various ways."

Seeking virtue in 'sin taxes'

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

FACED with a gaping budget deficit of almost P200 billion this year, the government is boldly seeking to restore its gains to impose "sin taxes" on alcohol, tobacco, and—quite audaciously—betting." While earlier taxes have been levied traditionally to discourage vices that generate externalities, an unnamed finance department official says that a cut be levied as well on betting. It seems necessary to impose, especially the winning of jokes, and is needless to "drugs that spring and encourage vices without are supposed to be punishment-nothing hours." The Philippines is the "betting capital of the world," with an estimated 12.5 million betting sessions daily by 24 million online phone users. Of these, an estimated 1.5 million bets are "double-dared" or "three-blessings-betting."

The plan just has touched by hunter B. Inner Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, who proposed a 10-percent levy on each P1 000 winnings. Camacho also said that the bettors and bookmakers would serve as the collecting agent. Congress shouted the plan from, says media reports, and the Senate Committee on Ways and Means is already drawing up a bill.

Not surprisingly, the new measure came up against immediate protests. ELTT says the tax proposal sets an industry that has contributed to an economy personally growing by leaps. The argument proves too much. They contribute largely because they are lucky to work and a good part of what they earn they apparently have splurged on advertising. Indeed the companies are among the biggest spenders in advertising, with Dizon and Smart ranking 5th and 6th among the top advertisers. The past year alone, Globe spent P1.3 billion for advertising, and Smart P1.7 billion. Telecom providers are the most frequent sponsors of primetime news to personal care and food products. The industry has the finance strong advertising budget to the country, and projects a 15-percent increase in subscribers this year.

Globe says it can only afford a "double digit increase because the entire sum is imposed on top of a 10 percent "VAT (Value Added Tax) already levied. Not quite right, since there is double-tax.

Any study suggest that "being able to laugh at yourself—or at least being able to see humor in difficult circumstances," Lyell Smith, (the same)—may be a powerful equalizer against accidents.

Researchers asked 3000 persons, half of whom with heart disease, a long list of "what if" questions. They found that in the group said, "what people with heart disease were ill, persons less likely to see humor in life's everyday absurdities than people of the same age with healthy hearts.

"Me humor than practicing, not smoking, and eating foods low in saturated fat will reduce my risk of heart attack," the program quoted cardiologist Michael Miller. "Perhaps thinking funny laughter should be added to the list."

Another study showed that two neurologists in Kansas City, Missouri, had developed the St. Louis Linda Endoscopy, they named "St. buddy store, half of whom were told that in three days they would be treated to a comedy show. Those were showed that only three days, they would be treated to a comedy show. Those were showed that only three days, they would be treated to a comedy show. Those were showed that only three days,

Chatterbox

ANALYSIS

Leonardo Dorontila

THE PHILSUCOM Odyssey seemed to fire Aquilino Pimentel, which further widened the chasm of votes for president and vice president, reveals a few things about Panfilo Lacson and the political opposition's notion of inclusiveness in a democracy.

Pimentel was in the spotlight of TV and print media all day last Thursday that may be the reason he misplaced so much on every division of the coordinates of election that appeared to him to be evidence of election fraud. Pimentel obviously enjoyed being in the limelight, playing the heroic role of the underdog who was shackled by the system. He pursued himself like Leviathan of Spenser, whose 100 tentacles held the Dreams at the ocean, were choke points and monument pens called Theocracies. But unlike Leviathan, whose lust caused hundreds of thousands of casualties in the centuries between Homer's Iliad to Spenser's Faerie Queene, Pimentel's filibuster did not advance the interests of much either. It did show Pimentel could not be gagged. Filibustering, as a tool designed in parliament to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority, proved a tool designed in parliament to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority, proved a tool designed in parliament to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority, proved

Philippine dictatorship, Part II?

Is the Philippines moving into a police state?

Increasingly, it seems our government cannot undertake anything significant without overwhelming police-military deployments.

Congress cannot move to open sessions at the Quezon City Batasan Complex without first converting the area into a militarized zone, forcing thousands of police-military personnel to march past Kalibo buses cannot be moved from the Senate office in Manila to the Senate without a heavy police-military escort. Malacañang is no longer the people's palace: it has been transformed into a garrison. In many places in Mindanao, classes were cancelled by the authorities.

Is it we being conditioned to rely upon the police and the military to secure the normal functioning of society—perhaps, preparatory to a public military takeover of power? Is president and legal destabilization only part of the scenario-building process?

That's why the current Congress can exercise right to vacate in the proclamation of a president who has an intelligent moral authority to govern. Above such moral authority, whoever is proclaimed—President Macapagal or Fernando Poe Jr.—will have to depend on

grossly open police-military support to

—GRACE DAYDONG,
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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish anyletters unless such information is supplied.

Cover-up on Lebanon?

REPORTAGE of Foreign Affairs officials have created the Philippine Embassy in Beirut of any culpability on the death of three Filipino workers in Lebanon?

We maintain that the preliminary report of the DFA investigating team headed by lawyer Noel Fernandez is nothing but a whitewash. The team only "checked on the news" of Loretta Ann Rosenberg, who died on Feb. 24, Catherine Bautista, who died on May 3, and Leo Pacsinal, who died on May 10. All three were killed while trying to escape from their abusive Lebanese employers. The investigation was conducted not to build a case against the abusive employers, but to find the DFA a convenient excuse to put the blame on the victims themselves.

Fernandez did what we feared the DFA wanted to do: come up with a biased report of the concerned embassy officials. We maintain that the accountability for the three deaths did not end with Ambassador Mueller's resignation; the DFA leadership must also answer for those under the principle of command responsibility.

The DFA has the duty to immediately assist distressed overseas Filipino workers who seek voluntary extraction. Ambassador Mueller has admitted that his communications to the DFA about addressing the plight of the OFWs in Lebanon and Riyadh are dead ears.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert herself should be taken to task, especially because the inadvertence of Albert and the military's seeming indifference to their plight can be found are only to coherence but also to many other occurrences. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's administration has systematically failed to protect the rights and welfare of the OFWs. Many heads must roll in the pursuit of justice for Loretta, Catherine, Leo and others similar to them.

—RIGHTS Para Lisa,
National Office,
CSB Cumming Road,
Quezon City, Philippines

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Judge killed in ambush in Batangas

By Hel Magdua
Philippine Daily Inquirer Luzon Bureau

LIPA CITY—A regional trial court judge became the fourth victim of a gun-wielding motorcycle rider who has been on a killing spree since Wednesday morning.

Killed in the ambush was Lemery Regional Trial Court Branch 83 Judge Roberto Rosales, 48, who was on his way home to Malvar after a hearing in court.

According to investigators of the Batangas police, Rosales was driving his car and was in front of the Total Child School in Barangay Sto. Niño city when an armed motorcycle rider got near his car and shot him several times.

The suspect fled in a still unknown direction after shooting Rosales.

Rosales suffered multiple head wounds and was rushed to the Rosario General Hospital but died in the emergency room.

Jokes

According to RTC Branch 83 sheriff Prudencio Mendoza, Rosales had been the judge of the RTC Branch 83 since 1995, after he left the Office of the Solicitor General.

"He used to joke around how of some death threats that he had been receiving lately," Mendoza said, "But he never took the death threats seriously."

According to Mendoza, Rosales used to have a bodyguard and a driver but the security personnel were based in the office and never accompanied him home.

"This morning, he was alone when he left directly after his last court hearing," he said, "he was even joking around that he is single (zero value) that no one about to take home would dull-witedly kill him. He was a dedicated."

Rosales said they were all shocked when they heard the news and rushed to the hospital to see Rosales, but they didn't know yet if the judge survived or not.

Objection

According to Batangas police, Rosales died shortly after arriving at the hospital.

Rosales was the fourth victim of the gun-wielding motorcycle rider who shot and killed the chief of the apprehending team of the Land Transportation Office in Barangay City on Wednesday at 8:30 in the morning.

At 11 a.m. the same day a robbery suspect and witness who were about to attend the court hearing of their case were also shot by a gun-wielding motorcycle rider at the gate entrance of the RTC Hall also in Batangas City.

Suspects in gold bullion robbery still at large, but charges filed

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—The suspects who stole a gold bullion worth P32.2 million from the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. in Mankayan town last year are still at large but charges have been filed against them before the regional trial court here.

Indicted for conspiracy to commit robbery with multiple homicide were Agapito Quilang, Julito Banawis, Reynaldo Salting, Danny Nebreda, Mario Garcia, Noel Tabang and several other unidentified suspects.

They were cited for forcibly taking a 22.486-kg gold bar on Sept. 30, 2003, and for killing engineer Ricardo Tayzon Jr., security guards Ramon Pongtol, Abraham Dumango, Rene Chupchupen and Francis Mallare.

The gold bar was taken from a company-owned pickup truck while it was being transported from the mill plant to the LCMC's general office.

The provincial prosecutor's office, which filed the charges, said it expected the court to issue arrest warrants for the suspects after the supreme police issued to Judge Thelma Bellen of the Mankayan municipal trial court were returned unserved.

In April, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Mankayan police reported that they failed to arrest the suspects since they had already left the town.

Police maintained the preliminary investigation of the case and have recommended the filing of charges, saying there was probable cause to show that the suspects, "with intent to gain and with violence against persons, took away the gold bullion." (Nehemiah Cordero, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau)

Comelec assailed for ₱200 deduction in election pay

CUBBAO CITY—Hundreds of personnel who served as members of board of election inspectors (BEIs) during the May 10 elections assailed the Commission on Elections for the delayed release of their P3,000 individual honoraria.

Worse, a P200 mandatory deduction was made on their honoraria.

"Why the decision, we were shortchanged for our hard earned money," said Alison Rosas, one of the teachers who, he claimed, was forced to recount the money.

"It's not the P200 that is the issue here, honesty is the issue, we were not told at first or before elections we'll only get P2,800, we were told [we would] receive P3,000," he said.

"We were made to sign [receipts] showing the amount of P3,000 when we each one of us, but only P2,800 was given," another Iriga woman complainant said.

"We waited so long for this stipend only to find out that we had been shortchanged," another complainant said.

The city has a total of 377 precincts with teachers and non-teachers comprising the three members for BEIs.

Sought for comment, city election officer Regie Maestrado and Comelec director for Central Mindanao Clarita Calite could hardly be reached in their cellular phones as officer-in-charge said she was officially now in Manila since Wednesday.

But one complainant, who claimed to have illustrious parent, insisted that the official was at the Comelec office here on June 9 when she was asked to sign the voucher for the honorarium.

Meantime, according to her, explained that the P200 mandatory deduction for each recipient was made to pay the interest of an undisclosed amount that the local Comelec borrowed from a lending institution in Milaoapp, North Cotabato after Comelec Manila gave assurances the amount would be released in July.

"Why should they borrow when appropriation for the purpose had already been earmarked or set aside by the government as early as April?" a complainant asked.

"This is the problem, we were the ones who worked, but we did not get the fair and square share of our labor," remarked another, adding that surcharges or interest on the loan should not be borne by them.

Earlier, Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin reported the initial release in April of P5 billion to the Comelec as payment for BEIs' honorarium.

According to her, the education department handles the teachers' honorarium.

Poll personnel had been up till past 11 p.m. on Wednesday attending to the BEIs honorarium which they said would be used in their children's schooling and household needs.

The same sentiment of delayed payment of honorarium was also raised by many BEIs in Magsaysay last July. Charlie Señase and Edwin Fernandez, PhilMechanic Bureau

Special polls set in 4 Albay villages

By R. Loreja and M. Jacalan
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LEGAZPI CITY—The Commission on Elections regional office has assured the conduct of special elections in four barangays in Ligao City on June 19.

The Comelec central office granted the request of Ligao City election officer Norie Badiola for special elections after a failure of elections in Barangays Binitinan, Abella, Rizal and Albang last May 10.

Failure of election was declared in the four barangays when ballot boxes were snatched and others were burned by armed men shortly after the May 10 voting.

Comelec Regional Director Zacarias Jaragosa said the special elections could give a number of votes to candidates for vice mayor and city councilors of Ligao City.

However, it will no longer affect the position of elected mayor Linda Gonzalez.

According to him, they have already coordinated with the Philippine Army and the Philippine National Police to provide security during the special elections.

SCHOOL WORK
Children help clean up the Teresita Elementary School in Guinobatan, Albay at the opening of classes on Monday.

Bridge program a test of DepEd curriculum

BAGUIO CITY—The controversial bridge program has revealed the weakness of the equally controversial New Education Curriculum (NEC), which former Education Secretary Raul Roco implemented three years ago, Department of Education officials said here on Wednesday.

But DepEd is not giving up on the NEC, even after test test scores revealed that elementary graduates who underwent the streamlined curriculum still failed to pass standard literacy, Science and Mathematics tests in May 22, said Benedicto Tagubio, DepEd director in the Cordillera.

The NEC was developed after years of extensive studies into contemporary child psychology and modern education theories, Tagubio said.

It focused on elementary students' attention to rudimentary knowledge in Mathematics, Science and English, which equip them for the age of technology, she said.

At first, teachers expected that elementary graduates should have attainment literacy commensurate of a 10-year-old.

But Tagubio said the high school readiness test revealed that majority of the aspiring high school students were not even literate, in spite of the NEC.

In the Cordillera, state elementary graduates from Mt. Province and Benguet registered figures in the mathematics tests, or the overall marks for the Cordillera indicated that only 36.91 percent of elementary school graduates qualify for a regular high school test.

Tagubio said these graduates qualified only after Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus reduced the passing rate of 50 percent (or 41 raw scores out of 90 questions in English, Math and Science) done in 50 percent passing rate (or a raw score of 27).

Dr. Proteus topped the Cordillera test with 1,506 out of 2,372 examinees or 63 percent passing. In Benguet, 2,816 out of 4,507 graduates or 64.7 percent qualified for a regular high school test.

"We suspect that teachers who objected to the NEC applied it half-heartedly or had resisted using it in the classrooms," an education official said.

Teachers who were trained to tackle both the NEC and the bridge program reflected equally poor responses to competency tests, the official said.

"We conducted a test for high school teachers, and there were teachers who could not even follow test instructions. Wouldn't it be fair if we compel teachers to take readiness examinations also?"

Tagubio said the streamlined basic education is an evolving curriculum that will adjust to the changes reflected by examinations like the bridge program's readiness test.

DepEd Tarlac teachers from promoting Grade 3 pupils to Grade 4, should rate could that they remain illiterate, she said.

She said both the NEC and the bridge program responds to the contemporary lifestyles these children find themselves in.

"Studies suggested that children who have poverty in their very core from families whose parents also did poorly (in their subjects) or who never graduated from the elementary," she said.

Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ENVIRONMENT CAUSE
Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn, who is also head of the Tagbaloy Foundation, awards cash donation to Task Force Mabulgat, Mindoro's overeighteen environment watchdog, during World Environment Day last June 6 in Cagayan de Oro City.

New round of power rate increases looms

From page A1

terms more yet 10% at P1.31 from P1.21.

At a briefing, ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said yesterday that distribution utilities, including Meralco, would have to take these new Napocor grid rates into consideration when they file their next automatic rate adjustment mechanism (CIAM) applications.

'Pass through cost'

Being a "pass through cost" for the Napocor-led firm, all additional cash it will receive from its customers as a result of the newly approved CIAM will not stay in its coffers but will be remitted to Napocor and its independent power producers.

While Napocor's recently approved higher generation charges, Meralco's CIAM filing covering the February-April period will result in another power rate hike upon approval by the ERC.

Albano said the adjustment in Napocor's generation charges was granted because of escalating fuel prices and the weakening of the peso against the dollar.

"We have no other recourse but to grant the rate adjustments application of the generating companies that include the Napocor to help them stay viable and continue providing safe, adequate, reliable and quality electricity service," he said.

Meralco and other distribution utilities file CIAM applications every quarter to reflect fluctuations in power generation costs.

Enrile's province

From page A1

Enrile reminded the government that it "should protect the interest of power consumers as well since," not the interest of Meralco, whose controversial power price adjustment scheme was the subject of his TV campaign ad "Problema nyo, sagot ko!" (I'll take care of your problems).

Enrile, who won in the last senatorial election on a platform of consumer advocacy, promised to "look into (Meralco's) claim that the new rate increase had something to do with fuel cost-environment-rate adjustments."

He earlier promised to work in the Senate for the reduction in electricity taxes and reforms in the power sector.

During the election campaign, Enrile warned of "record after record of abusive and unjust electricity rate increases by state-favored power providers in the next six years should Presidente Macapagal-Arroyo" win the May 10 polls.

Enrile, head of the Philippine Consumer Watch, described Ms Macapagal as "Salonga ng mga Meralco" (puppet of Meralco) during the campaign. Malacañang has denied Enrile's accusation.

The increase was allegedly a concession to the Lopezes to allow their popular ABS-CBN television talent, Boy Abunda, to be Ms Macapagal's running mate in the May polls.

The Lopezes have denied such allegations.

Appeal to Meralco

Aside from confronting Meralco, Banat and Multiparty would consider other options to delay the power rate hike by making a similar opposition Supreme

While protesting Napocor's generation rates will help force solutions to the country's expensive power, this will still take some time because the government has been getting stronger efforts for those facilities, according to Banat.

"We're trying to pressure Napocor but only at a price that is acceptable to all of us," he said.

Lopez-owned IPPs

The millions Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) blamed the Lopez-owned IPPs for, Bita and San Lorenzo for the GRAM-related increase in power rates.

Bayan spokesperson Renato Reyes Jr. said Meralco continued to source electricity from these power plants although they were charging more than Napocor.

He also criticized current laws governing the power generation sector, saying there was no clear way to find out whether generation charges passed on to consumers by distributors, such as Meralco, really reflected the true cost of producing electricity.

"Since the generation sector is deregulated, Meralco's rate increases permit because of the (Lopez-owned) IPPs. It's the same story as the deregulated oil industry," he said.

Reyes said the adjustment in power rates would just "add to the woes of consumers who were severely burdened by rising oil prices." With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Jerry Esplanada

Meralco consumers to receive P13-B refund

From page A1

As for the bill deposits, which customers have to pay to be able to avail themselves of power distribution services, the Magna Carta provides that this amount can be fully refunded, even before termination of service, under certain conditions.

Disconnection notice

While the general rule is for the bill deposit to be eligible for refund not less one month from the termination of service, customers whose demand is half or more of their deposit if they have subsequently paid their bills on time over a period of three years.

"The Magna Carta also provides clear-cut policies on connection and disconnection of electricity services, the source of most complaints filed with the commission," Albano said.

Under the new rules, no disconnection service can be carried out without prior notice. It also spells out the obligations of residential consumers, particularly the payment of monthly bills.

Asked about the impact of these new rules on Meralco's cash flow, Ismina de la Peña, Meralco vice president and utility secretary chief, said that unless the ERC handed down the final guidelines on the refund, the effect of the new rules was difficult to determine.

Surprised

"What is a new development that we have to study first. This (Magna Carta) is not like the last draft [of the rules] that we have with us. We're really surprised that the rules have become quite different," she said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Besides, she said the new rules did not exactly demand a refund of the bill deposits, unlike the issue deposits.

Even with the senior deposits, she said, no provision in the rules called for an immediate refund of the total amount.

"The effect on our cash flow will really depend on the guidelines that the ERC will set. We'll assess the impact of the new rules when we see the final guidelines. But we'll make our appeal," De la Peña said.

Escrow account

The National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore) earlier filed a motion with the ERC, urging the regulatory body to compel Meralco into placing the meter and bill deposits in an escrow account.

Deposits used

The group said this would ensure that Meralco customers would be able to get the amount when they want to close an account.

"Our request is based primarily on the consideration that meter and bill deposits should be readily made available to Meralco customers in any time they may want to withdraw the deposit plus the accrued interests thereon from the date of its payment," Nasecore president Ben Ilagan said.

As Meralco used part of the meter and bill deposits that it collected from its customers to help fund its daily operations, Ilagan said there was a chance that this amount would no longer be returned to the customers.

"We are afraid that Meralco may not be able to refund to its customers' meter and bill deposits with accrued interest, especially if there is to be a mass request for refund," he said.

Meralco officials admitted during the hearing that part of these deposits were being used for its daily operations and were also invested in high-yielding financial instruments," he added.

Third phase of refund

Meralco, a publicly-listed utility, is already under previous orders to refund an estimated P30.3 billion to customers which negative rates ruled had been overcharged in the 1990s.

Meralco said it would complete the third phase of its refund scheme covering 850,000 customers by the end of the year.

In the third phase, which involves a total refund of P4.0 billion, customers can choose to take the cash or a credit against future Meralco bills.

The company, which is 25 percent owned by the government, will soon enter the fourth and final phase of the refund scheme that was ordered by the Supreme Court after years of swabbling.

"We are finding means to ensure that we pay out the refund of customers who fall under phase three," said refund project manager Gliceil Tuason.

By the end of the third phase, Meralco will have given refunds to nearly 90 percent of its residential customers.

"We want to finish this based on the schedule ordered by the Energy Regulatory Commission so we can go on with the next and last phase, which involves our commercial and industrial customers," Tuason said.

Better year

The refunds ordered by the company's bottom line in the last two years but Meralco has said it expects a better year in 2004 due to higher electricity charges and a wider customer base.

Meralco is awaiting a decision by the Supreme Court on a proposed increase of 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) on its distribution charge, which was raised in January due to protests by consumer groups.

On Thursday, the company said it would raise generation charges, effective July to recover extra costs it has paid to power producing firms.

Causes for rate hike

It said the higher charge was aimed at recovering costs due to fluctuations in fuel prices, the foreign exchange rate and power generation charges of state-owned National Power Corp., the country's largest power producer.

The ERC allowed Meralco to raise generation charges by 11.27 centavos per kWh, or about 4.2 percent, from the current P3.186 starting in July. With reports from AFP and Reuters

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	60mg Tab	11.50	68%
Metoprolol*	50mg Tab	3.75	68%
	100mg Tab	6.65	68%
Propranolol*	10mg Tab	2.50	67%
	40mg Tab	3.75	67%
ANTIDIABETES			
Glibenclide*	5mg Tab	2.75	68%
Metformin*	500mg Tab	4.90	70%
	850 mg Tab	7.50	70%
ANTIASTHMA / COUGH			
Salbutamol*	2mg Tab + 60ml	85.75	67%
	4mg Tab	3.75	67%
Terbutaline*	2.5mg Tab + 60ml	47.25	67%
	5mg Tab	6.25	68%
Ambroxol*	15mg Tab + 60ml	85.75	67%
	30mg Tab + 120ml	85.75	67%
	30mg Tab + 60ml	85.75	67%
	30mg Tab + 120ml	85.75	67%
	30mg Tab	3.75	68%
ANTIINFECTIVES			
Cefalexin*	125mg Cap	2.50	67%
	250mg Cap	3.75	67%
	125mg Tab + 60ml	85.75	67%
	250mg Tab + 60ml	154.50	67%
	500mg Tab + 60ml	154.50	67%
Cefaclor*	125mg Cap	6.75	67%
	250mg Cap	10.95	67%
	125mg Tab + 60ml	145.00	67%
	250mg Tab + 60ml	145.00	67%
	125mg Tab + 120ml	145.00	67%
	250mg Tab + 60ml	195.00	68%
	500mg Tab + 120ml	195.00	68%
	500mg Tab + 60ml	195.00	68%
Cloxacillin*	500mg Cap	14.00	67%
FOR MIGRAINE, VERTIGO/HE & DYSMENORRHEA			
Mefenamic Acid	250 mg Tab	2.75	73%
	500 mg Tab	5.00	73%
VITAMIN C			
Ascorbic Acid	500 mg Tab	1.50	70%
FOR BOWEL & PILE			
Paracetamol	250 mg Tab	1.50	68%
	150 mg Sp. + 60ml	85.75	68%
FOR DIARRHEA			
Loperamide	2 mg Tab	4.50	71%
FOR COUGH			
Guaifenesin	100 mg Tab	2.00	80%
	60 ml Sy.	65.00	80%
Bromhexine	4mg + 30ml	85.75	67%
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Founded 1920

8 'graduating' senators bid farewell, laud Drilon

Front page A1

of votes by Congress.

Even the "laborious search for truth" seemed to be "in hopeless attendance" as the search for our political success" ebb said.

Statesman, mentor

She specially thanked Sen. Juliano Flavier, "my statesman and mentor for 20 years, and best friend, too" and Senate President Franklin Drilon "whose confidence and trust in me allowed me to accomplish so much."

Legarda, who retired as majority floor leader in the last three years of her term, said: "I leave the halls of this august chamber with a deep and fond hope that Congress, in the current context, will prove the light and bring about the truth."

Sen. Loren Legarda acknowledged that switching parties had cost him his reelection bid in the May 10 polls. He made a mistake, he said, when he jumped from the opposition's side to the administration's.

Gamboa figured that the backlash was dealt mainly by supporters of ousted President Joseph Estrada. They must have been riled, he said, by his abstinence against Ms Macapagal, and not Estrada's pardon, in the presidential race.

"Many times, they confronted me and asked, 'Why did you leave us?' he recalled. 'I would just say, 'Sa Diyos ko ibinalik mata, but he is not running.' I never abandoned Erap, but they were motivated I did."

Gamboa also said Gabay 2000-20 volunteers pushed him in favor of independent candidate Bolbolcen Bibiano. He singled out former President Fidel V. Ramos: "Just look what ever he tries to forecast and you will see that I was behind in those areas."

He made it clear that he wasn't interested in any Cabinet post should Ms Macapagal be proclaimed president. Neither would he ever make another bid for the Senate, he added.

"This is my last day in this institution," he told reporters. "(But) I might run for governor of Cebu or mayor of Cebu City."

He said, he was going back to farming.

'Very divisive'

Skipping the niceties, Osmeña lived her usual scathing criticism of the Upper House pro. "It was a very divisive, partisan Senate," she said.

Divila, sister of dead-end opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr., did not seek reelection but participated for Poe.

In her valedictory, she said, "some disagree with opposing views still served like senators of the land, whose patriotism remains" amidst the interests of the people. "Here, political partisanship weighs much more."

Aquino admonished senate Senator Jinggoy Estrada, who also ran for reelection and lost, "We are in politics, what do you expect?"

Estrada held seven of major posts during his 12-year stint, including minority floor leader. He felt "privileged" to have been part of the Senate, he said.

"It has been an enriching experience for me to have a hand, in one way or another, in setting the orderly conduct of our Senate proceedings. At the end of the day, I would like to say that I have done my best," he said.

Father and son

Revilla was, simply, happy. His son and namesake is set to take his turn as legislator.

"I'm overjoyed by the fact that Bong Revilla Jr. was elected senator of the 13th Congress of the Philippines," the father said. "I wish him success in his endeavors. It is my hope and prayer that his performance in this august chamber will be in keeping with the best traditions of the Senate."

Overall, the valedictory addresses were genial.

The speakers all expressed gratitude to their colleagues, singling out Drilon for their "even-handed administration."

During the session, the Senate adopted resolutions commending Drilon, Majority Floor leader Francis Pangilinan, Sotto and Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Flavier, who occupied the top three positions in the upper chamber.

After the valedictory addresses, Drilon did not declare an adjournment but merely suspended the session since Sen. Aregos Gamboa he was still discussing amendments to a bi cameral report.

Drilon explained: "Tomorrow we could still meet and adjourn formally, but if we don't move, it is automatically adjourned." He said it was a constitutional provision that the Senate should adjourn on June 11, the last day in its legislative calendar.

'Sine die'

Earlier, before the session opened at past 10 a.m., Pangilinan and Sen. Manuel Villar said they were open to the idea of the Senate and joining into the holdover saving a day for the inauguration after the proclamation of the president and vice president.

This, they argued, would preclude any legal moves to question the legality of the Senate and the House of Representatives sitting as national board of canvassers.

Precedents

Drilon recounted that the 8th and 10th Congress Senate adjourned sine die after before the chamber convened in a joint public session to canvass votes in the 1992 and 1998 elections.

"That was done, so that by the time the joint public session was called in 1992 and 1998, Congress had already adjourned sine die," he said. He pointed out that on May 24, the Senate adopted Resolution No. 39, which provided that Senate and House hold a joint public session to canvass the votes.

Thus, Drilon said, "I don't see any problem [with that]."

VIPS . . .

Front page A1

awaited. "You have one minute to teleport."

Minutes, many wearing formal dresses for the formula screaming rushed off high-heeled shoes to enable them to run faster. Thousands of ordinary Americans in shorts and tank tops who had queued up for hours also scrambled for cover and lost their place in the line.

Within minutes, however, authorities on Wednesday determined the small plane was carrying Kentucky Gov. Ernie Fletcher to the funeral and had lost its radio transmission after flying in to restricted airspace around Washington.

Two F-16 fighter jets were dispatched from an air patrol to intercept the Beechcraft King Air 200 plane. It was unclear if the fighters also intercepted the plane or were called off before reaching it. Attorney general Gale said a positive identification was made after the governor's office was contacted by radio.

The building was reopened at around 6:30 p.m., about 1 1/2 hours before the start of the procession bringing Reagan's body to the Capitol Rotunda.

Second in line

During the period of uncertainty, police had briefed House Speaker Dennis Hastert—second in line to the presidency—among on a secured motorcade.

Across the street, at the Supreme Court, police gathered several of the justices and whisked them away in cars. An alarm sounded, and officers yelled at workers: "To the basement, to the basement."

Police in the Capitol had urged people running down stairways to run faster. An officer shouted at one photographer trying to look back through a camera, "You don't have time to look back."

"Incoming plane!" another police officer shouted as reporters asking what was going on.

Run, don't walk

Sen. Lisa Murkowski was on the third floor of the Capitol with her staff when the fire alarms first went off and they started walking out of the building.

"We were walking until we were told to run, get out of the building," Murkowski said, as one of her staff members tried to find a lost camera. "I got a little exercise this afternoon."

The government's bomb squad flying Air 200 had permission to fly into the restricted airspace but briefly lost its identifying transponder signal 25 km southwest of Reagan National Airport, said Greg Hilferty, spokesperson for the Federal Aviation Administration.

Federal authorities, already on high alert, declared the incident a false alarm and extended an all-clear after aviation and security personnel were able to identify the aircraft and determine it was not a threat.

At about the same time the alarm was raised, one of the limos pre-used by President George W. Bush as he visited the funeral carrying Reagan's body to Washington was leaving Andrews Air Force Base near the city.

Precise ID check

Private and commercial planes must follow a precise distribution checklist that must be accomplished before approaching the metropolitan.

Fletcher had special permission to land at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport, which has been off limits to small planes since the Sept. 11, 2001, hijack attacks. Its restrictions are generally more VIPs.

"He had a waiver. He was having problems with his transponder, so they could not identify him," Wells Martin said. "It was not a threat."

There have been many false alarms involving private and commercial aircraft flying near Washington since the attacks. Most of the time pilots have strayed into restricted air space or have failed to follow proper identification procedures. AP, Reuters

Archbishop says lawmakers making fools of themselves

From page A1

"Let them bore themselves in the head with their own foolishness ... Let them collapse," said Rosales, a usually low-key Catholic Church leader who generally steers clear of politics.

Rosales' harsh tirade against the country's lawmakers came two days after the spokesperson, retired Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, called up the wife of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and asked her to withdraw husband's ruling filibustering.

Canvass

On Thursday night, Congress planned to subdivide 28 more certificates of canvass (CoCs) containing votes for president and vice president in various provinces, cities, districts and overseas voting centers. This would bring to 99 the number of CoCs it had tabulated out of a total of 176 CoCs.

As of 7:30 p.m. Thursday, the 99 CoCs that had been tabulated showed Pres. Arroyo, Macapagal-Arroyo with 195,259 votes and actor Fernando Poe Jr. with 168,172 votes. In the vice presidential race, Sen. Loren Legarda was ahead with 203,258 votes while Sen. Noli de Castro had 200,005 votes.

At 8:40 p.m. after the dinner break, the session was suspended to be reconvened at 9 p.m. today.

Only Congress, sitting in the national board of canvassers, can proclaim the winners of the presidential and vice presidential races. But a month after the May 10 elections, the congressional canvass, top of the votes has dragged on.

More delays

Presented and rebut ables of five have managed to delay the process by billing the Congress debate, the latest of the national board and certificates of election returns. Supporters of Ms Macapagal and Sen. Jinggoy Estrada claim that the Comelec violated the manual and the automated election law when it failed to proclaim the winners by June 30.

The deadline was set by the 12th Congress of the Philippines, the inauguration date of June 30 is looking increasingly unattainable. Both the Senate and House of Representatives are scheduled to adjourn today, and some lawmakers say they may have to come back to session since the Macapagal's 1st session on June 30.

The debate over the adjournment of Congress delayed for two hours the start of yesterday's canvassing.

Greatest destructive element

Rosales voiced his frustration at the sluggish senate "(Politicians) are making a load of themselves, and the time will come when people would no longer believe them and that time is near," he said in a press conference at the Archbishop's House.

The archbishop said he was "101 percent a nonbeliever of politics as practiced by Philippine politicians." He added that the "greatest destructive element that ruined the Philippines at the last 58 years is Philippine politics."

Rosales said the senate politicians should declare the last 58 years a moratorium on politics. This, he added, would provide a boost to the Fernando Poe Jr.-Loren Legarda tandem that has emerged as the people's choice.

Opposition Magnificence Sen. Didagat Mangudadatu defended Pimentel, saying he followed the wishes of his family up against the numerical superiority of administration lawmakers.

Mangudadatu said Sen. appeal to Pimentel to stop delaying the canvassing was a form of "exclusionist intolerance, a violation of the separation of Church and State."

'Futile, pathetic'

Joining the fray, Senator-elect Miriam Defensor Santiago said Pimentel's filibuster was "confusing and a delaying tactic."

"In today's parliamentary practice, a filibuster is no longer considered heroic or glamorous, but futile and a pathetic annoyance," Santiago, who serves as one of the Macapagal's counsels in the canvassing, said in a statement that was issued before Estrada withdrawing in Congress.

Santiago also suggested that Pimentel seek medical attention.

"It is said by doctors truly qualified in their profession that if you begin hearing little voices in your head, you should obviously seek the best medical attention available," she said, adding that she never sought medical help because "I have never listened to the voices."

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye also accused the opponents of Macapagal-Arroyo of "playing politics" during the count and report alleged fraud.

"This strategy is old hat and the public is not biting the bait ... They should desist in the face of mounting public indignation," Bunye said.

"These administration to delay the proceedings are no longer pretend to catch the truth ... The only truth is they are trying the public interest," he added.

Adjournment

Complicating the situation is the scheduled adjournment of Congress today. Hilario Ruy Duiry dragging said he would seek to clarify with congressional leaders whether or not the rules should continue.

Once Congress adjourns, it could no longer meet to canvass the votes for president and vice president, Duiry said.

But Senate Rep. Francis Escudero, who served as Fpj's campaign spokesperson, said that the 12 members total could form the Senate and House which is spearheading the final count. Escudero said he is not confident that the legislative calendar.

"We are sitting in joint session as the national board of canvassers," Escudero said.

Senator Juan Ponce Enrile said the adjournment of Congress would not put a stop to the canvassing of the votes for president and vice president.

"The adjournment of the session of Congress sine die just pertains to its legislative and law-making functions. It has nothing to do with canvassing. The canvassing functions of Congress to canvass the votes and proclaim the winners in the presidential and vice presidential elections is done in joint session," Enrile said.

Rosales said a similar situation arose in 1992 and 1995 when the 8th and 10th Congresses also adjourned sine die even before the convening of a joint session to canvass the votes and proclaim the winners in the presidential and vice presidential elections in those years. *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Christine O. Avendaño, Jr. B. Romero, Michael Lim Ubac, AP and AFP*

Top donors to GMA, FPJ campaigns listed

From page A1

4 coalition cropped up, however, and that could be linked to power like Macapagal-Arroyo assuming the presidency if she is proclaimed Senator-elect Ralph G. Recto.

According to Gonzaga, a former election official who is now one of the President's lawyers, the statement of expenses and contributions he filed could be considered Ms Macapagal's, as report on her campaign donations and expenses.

Separate report needed

But Lourdes Isorena had a different view. They said candidates must file a separate report from that filed by their parties.

In back with the Comelec resolution regarding the report total to combine the

Comelec Resolution No. 7233, states: "Within 30 days after the election, every candidate shall file with the commission a full, true and personal statement of all contributions and expenditures in connection with the election."

"The statement I filed separates the expenditures of Pres. Macapagal because they are separate and that of Lakas, which is the main party, are one and the same. So whatever was filed before the Comelec are the expenses of the President," Gonzaga said in a phone interview.

The 8:4 report said that it spent P102,364,220 in the recent election, well below the P400 million allowed for each presidential and vice-presidential candidate.

Other donors to the President's campaign were Bank Augusto, P6 million; Benito Antonio, P5 million; and Ramon Ancinas and the Rufino Group of Companies, P5 million each.

Presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Raul Roco and others who ran for national posts were to beat the deadline yesterday.

Fpj donors

Poe, for his part, reported spending P91,877,100 for the campaign while contributions to him totaled P92,110,000.

His contributors included Danilo Santiago, P30 million; Dante Santiago, P30 million; Wilfredo Wright Sip and Melo Santiago, P2 million each, and Richard Gomez and Armida Siguion-Reyna, P1 million each.

Moreover, a large part of Poe's contributions—P23.8 million—was listed only as coming from "various donors."

Roco reported spending P68.615 million in his campaign. He did not say how much he received in contributions.

Evangelista Bro. Eddie Villanueva reported receiving P1.6 million for spending only P1.5 million.

Among the vice presidential candidates, Sen. Noli de Castro spent The most—P69,464,776.77—while Sen. Loren Legarda spent P65,489 million. Mar Roxas reported expenditures of P6.332 million.

Noli, Lacson donors

In his report, De Castro said he received P12,292 million in contributions and loaned P59,283 million from his own funds.

His biggest contributors was Alex Chea of Ability Enterprises who gave P4.015 million.

Of the other listed, Legarda had seven contributors, eight of whom gave her P5 million each, while 19 others handed over P1 million each.

Those who gave her P5 million were Jesus Arguelles, Antolin Oreta, Antonio Tinio, Antonio Bautista and Fernando Angel Reperiones, Joseph Tiodayo gave her P4 million while another Legarda gave her P3 million.

Biggest contributor

In the senatorial race, the biggest contributor, and apparently the biggest overall, was Luis Alcuaz who gave P6.6 million to losing candidate John Osmeña.

The controversy on countless items and expenditures also showed that the biggest spenders among the senatorial candidates was Bernard "Bitz" Reyes who spent P94.72 million.

Reyes' campaign received P52 million from contributors, including big ins mother, Judy Araneta-Roxas, who gave P50 million.

The balances of the P94.73 million—P42.73 million—had come from his own funds, the rest are loans and.

Actor Lito Lapid said he spent P64.686 million, while Osmeña spent P63.348 million.

From P50M to P10K

Another losing candidate, Dr. Isabelo Montalla, spent 356,837 million, followed by actress Rosa Rosal, who lost with P34.915 million. Among the winners, Sen. Robert Jaworski spent P33.147 million.

Salvador Escudero, a Nacionalista Party Pilipinas vice-presidential candidate like Roco, spent P23. million, while Senator Roco P68 million.

Former Sen. Eduardo Gullas, who also lost, spent P6.837 million, while Senators Tessy Aquino Oreta P3.154 million and Oliver Lozano, P24,000.

Other senatorial candidates who filed their reports were Alfredo Lim who donated only P6 million to campaign and Ramon "Bong" Revilla with expenditures of P22.147 million. Sonny Trillanes-Montalla said he spent only P19,000.

KNP parades 10 'poll fraud witnesses' in slippers

From page A8

gave her the "closest margin" of one million votes over her closest rival, FPJ candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

He said the "BI members" would testify that 1,444 COC-protested poor their letter asking them to "protect" the votes of administration candidates before they opened the polling stations on May 10.

Mitchell said to each letter was P1,000, Cuella claimed. "Some of the cash was fake, some were genuine."

The witnesses had yet to clearly what "protecting the votes" entailed, Cuella said, but he stressed that the letters were required of representatives of political parties were not allowed to approach any BI member during the elections.

Cuella said many BEI members had been approached but could not exactly how many.

The other witnesses were supposed to testify that votes allegedly paid to vote in the last election in Cebu's two three towns and South Cotabato, Cuella said. He said he did not know how much they were paid.

Some, he said, voted in the city, using the names of dead persons while others were paid simply to vote for administration candidates.

'Conscience-stricken'

A representative of a local administration candidate paid the witnesses P100 each to fill up ballots, Cuella alleged.

All three gubernatorial candidates in Cebu supported the candidacy of Ms Macapagal. They were Gwen Garcia, daughter of Gov. Pablo Garcia; Governor Marcelito K. Pantaleon of Cebu Rep. Gerardo Blancaflor, and Vice Gov. Julio Jurgens Ouano, out of line. John Osmeña.

At the city the administration supported reelectional Mayor Tomas Osmeña, who defeated the opposition's candidate, former Mayor Alvin Garcia, by about 40,000 votes.

Cuella claimed that the "conscience-stricken" witnesses approached the ISF members after the elections, but it took them a long time to decide to testify because of fear.

He later told the inquirers that they would be provided subsistence to ensure their security and that the ISF was also extending financial assistance and other forms of support to them and their families.

Asked where the ISF was getting its funds, Cuella replied: "It comes like this, there are well-meaning citizens who are willing to help."

Affidavits

Cuella said the witnesses' affidavits would be presented "in a proper time and in a proper forum where there would be evidence."

Copies would be submitted to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and to Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal.

The CBCP had deemed the elections to be relatively peaceful and clean. Vidal earlier said the elections in Cebu were generally peaceful based on the report of the Cebu Citizens Involvement in the Administration, People Empowerment and Liberation (CIPEL).

Lost in Cebu

Rodriguez said the support that had already accepted that it would lose in Cebu but the margin would not be about a million votes as some say in the tally of the Commission on Elections.

Rodriguez said the city and province were just two of the 25 areas where the ISF believed it was cheated of about 2.5 million votes.

Ms Macapagal's camp believed the allegations that massive fraud was committed in Cebu and the other provinces is a brutally called press conference at the 'power-source office yesterday.

The charges were part of "a massive fraud that supposedly prevent President Macapagal's proclamation. They said to cripple to discredit the votes, particularly in Cebu because she won more than a million here," said Gregg Resurreccion, KNP media bureau chief.

'Sinister plot'

He said the opposition's invoked witnesses story not even to consideration the results of protests. "With reports from Cynthia Balana and Jaime B. Bolanos, Christine O. Avendaño, Jr. B. Romero, Michael Lim Ubac, AP and AFP

BUSINESS

Editor Raoul D. Pascua
Assistant Editor Corrie S. Madrilejos

'Hot' money inflow down 70% in May

By Doris C. Dumlao

YET portfolio investments in the Philippines tumbled by about 70 percent in May from year-ago level as political jitters, which intensified anew shortly after the May 10 presidential elections, kept investors at bay.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday reported that "hot" or speculative money inland into the country reached only $23.1 million in May, a sharp decline from $76.6 million recorded in the same month last year.

This likewise represented a drawdown from the $76.6 million worth of inflows in April, which was 49 percent better than the year-ago figure.

The May inflow brought the five-month portfolio investments in the country to $145.6 million, or better than the $144.3 million last year.

BSP Deputy Governor Armando Tetangco Jr. said the bulk of the portfolio investments during the period went to fixed income securities and money markets. He said there was inflation into the stock market in the early part of May, which however stopped after the first week.

Based on BSP figures, there were net outflows in the second and fourth week of May. During the month, the total portfolio investments for $166.7 million, higher than the $143.1 million worth of outflows.

Tetangco said it was more important to look at the year-to-date figure, which represented an improvement from year ago.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura also said portfolio investments would likely improve significantly in the second semester.

The BSP gets its data on foreign portfolio investments from reports of the country's five biggest custodian banks.

Although the peso has reversed from all-time lows, it is taking time to convince the market that President Macapagal-Arroyo had won the elections.

To date, Congress has yet to finish the official tally but the tabulation by the National Movement for Free Elections had shown that Ms Macapagal had secured a six-year mandate.

Monthly portfolio inflows were strongest in April this year as poll surveys indicated that Ms Macapagal had gained lead over rival Fernando Poe Jr., a movie actor. As elections drew near, however, political uncertainties spooked the markets again.

Despite the down portfolio inflows, the country's gross international reserves rose to $16.48 billion as of end-May this year or about $79 million better than a month ago following fresh bond offerings by the national government and state-owned National Power Corp.

At this level, the GIR build-up was still enough to cover 8.5 months of imports of goods as well as payments of services and income. It is also equivalent to 2.9 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.5 times based on residual maturity.

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BSP tightens watch on banks' money transfer transactions

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MANILA [illegible] general ng Pilipinas yesterday approved newer guidelines on the examinations of correspondent banking deals and money transfers to line with its drive against money laundering.

BSP Assistant Governor for bank supervision Nestor Espenilla yesterday said the policy-making Monetary Board approved tougher examination procedures to ensure adequate regulation of correspondent arrangements between local and foreign banks.

It's a set of procedures on how BSP examiners should go about ensuring the proper implementation of anti-money laundering rules, Espenilla said.

Money laundering is a practice where funds raised through unlawful activities are transacted to make them appear "clean" or earned through legitimate means.

To date, the Philippines is still on the list of so-called "uncooperative" countries by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force against money laundering.

The country has lost hope that it would be stricken off the blacklist this year.

FATF is an organization formed by member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which includes the powerful Group of Seven developed nations.

The organization included the Philippines in the original list of 15 uncooperative countries and territories, which was released in 2000, in that time, the country did not have any law against money laundering.

In 2001, the Philippines passed a law against the dirty money but still failed to convince the FATF that its new legislation complied with international standards.

While, the country managed to avoid sanctions from the G-7 countries, it remained on the blacklist.

The amended Philippine law against dirty money allows the government to look into any transaction worth at least P500,000, stricter than the previous threshold of P4 million.

This gave the authorities the leeway to probe suspicious cash deposits and investments. These are defined as those "without any credible purpose or origin, underlying trade obligation or contract."

In the past, the authorities had to seek a court order before they were given access to suspicious bank accounts in view of the bank secrecy law.

RP, Korea ink energy co-op deal

By Abigail L. Ho

DESPITE strong opposition from environmentalists, provincial government officials and residents, top Energy officials from the Philippines and Korea affirmed Korea Electric Power Corp.'s (Kepco's) intention to build a 2X6-megawatt (MW) coal-fired power plant in Cebu.

In talks Wednesday on the sidelines of the 22nd Asean Ministers on Energy Meeting, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez and Korean Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy chief Hee-Beom Lee forged a cooperation agreement to pursue several joint development.

The memorandum of understanding will pave special attention to the country's power-hungry Visayas grid, which is now experiencing crippling brownouts as a result of a demand-supply gap.

The grid [illegible] Panay-Leyte-Samar) currently has a total power supply of only 825.2 MW as opposed to a demand of 949.3 MW.

To help address this supply shortfall, the Department of Energy and its attached agencies have been undertaking efforts to attract investments both in power generation and transmission.

On the generation side, Kepco last year expressed interest in putting up a 200-MW power facility using clean coal technology in Cebu.

"We welcome Korea's move to put up an additional plant in the Philippines, especially so because this will generate additional capacity that will help plug the power supply requirements of Cebu," Perez said in a statement yesterday.

However, the planned coal-fired power plant has been staunchly opposed by environmentalists, provincial officials and residents because of its perceived adverse effects on the environment.

Apart from affirming Kepco's intention to build another plant here, Manuel talks between the Philippines and Korea also touched on possible cooperation efforts in the natural gas industry.

This is of particular interest to the Philippines as Korea is the world's second largest importer of liquefied natural gas, while the country is currently trying to develop its domestic natural gas sector.

The two countries signed the Natural Gas Switch Program for Public Transport, which aims to promote the use of cleaner fuel in the public transport sector.

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Private sector involvement in Asean power projects urged

GOVERNMENT officials from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) are considering private sector participation in projects that aim to interconnect the region's power grids and gas pipelines.

In a joint statement issued Wednesday evening during the 22nd Asean Ministers on Energy Meeting, the Asean officials said they were considering private entities to infuse the needed investments in interconnection projects that would ensure adequate and stable electricity supply throughout the region.

"The ministers reaffirmed that interconnected networks of electricity grids and gas pipelines in the Asean region offer significant benefits in terms of both energy saving, reliability and quality of energy supply and greater competition," the statement said.

Over the next six years, the 10 countries agreed that five power interconnection projects should be implemented to provide a more reliable supply of electricity and make it more accessible to a greater number of consumers.

The Trans-Asean Gas Pipeline (TAGP) project is also expected to finally materialize, especially with the ratification of the TAGP framework memorandum of understanding during Wednesday's meetings.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said the TAGP MOU would pave the way for the formal establishment of the Asean Gas Committee. The Council will be known for Center in Malaysia within the year.

The TAGP project will follow a five-year plan, which provides for gas pipelines for cross-border interconnection, South Sumatra Peninsular Malaysia, West Natuna (Serang in Malaysia, East Natuna Sarawak in Thailand, East Natuna Phu Mataisa Sarawak in Malaysia, and East Natuna Bay Natuna Singapore.

"To finish the TAGP, we need private sector investments," Perez said. —Abigail L. Ho

MVP buys more PLDT shares

By Clarissa E. Batino

TELECOM investor Manuel Pangilinan bought another 3,000 shares of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. last June 7 for P1.07 million, bringing his PLDT holdings to 75,419 shares.

Pangilinan, in a disclosure to the stock exchange, said he bought the shares at P1,070 each. PLDT shares closed 25 lower yesterday at P1,060.

The way Pangilinan has been accumulating PLDT shares indicated that the telecom executive believed the company would continue surpassing expectations, according to investors.

The telecom executive has been buying PLDT shares since late last year. Last month, the PLDT chair bought 1,000 shares at P980 each. As of May, his beneficial ownership in PLDT stood at 74,413 shares.

In a separate disclosure, PLDT said it would pay on July 15 cash dividends to holders of convertible preferred stocks as of June 15.

Holders of PLDT Series IC convertible preferred shares would be entitled to a cash dividend of $1.009 per share, those with PLDT Series V convertible preferred shares would get P4.675 per share, those with PLDT Series VI convertible preferred shares would receive $0.099 per share and owners of PLDT Series VII convertible preferred shares would be entitled to 15.119 per share.

Pangilinan assured common shareholders of PLDT that they would be paid dividends of at least 70 percent of net income by the first half of 2005.

PLDT stopped paying dividends to common shareholders in the middle of 2001 following a net loss of more than P46 billion in year 2000.

Analysts said Pangilinan's continued buying support could further boost the share price of PLDT.

"There is no stronger buy recommendation than a well-known executive like Pangilinan who had been gobbling up shares of PLDT," said an analyst.

When economists behave like lawyers

DR. CAYETANO Paderanga Jr. was being escorted with the team when he and the Philippine Stock Exchange announced that he was breaking the PSE presidency in order to go back to full-time at the UP School of Economics.

The former Neda chief was leaving his relatively old job that pays P520,000 plus plus a month to resume his discourse on the finest science for P50,000 a month? It does not make economic, not to mention common, sense.

And, as if to rub salt on his academic self-helped prickly pride, Paderanga even promoted a lawyer to replace him. (The lawyer, Francis Lim of Accra and currently also a PSE director, naturally declined.)

Paderanga has been under the gun from fellow PSE directors Vivian Yuchengco, Manuel Gan and Francisco Villaruel, ostensibly for maintaining too other full-time CEO jobs, one at the state-owned PHIC Investment and Management Corp. and another at the private Credit Information Bureau Inc.

Paderanga even gave the three stockbrokers added ammunition when, hardly had he assumed his seat, he took off for an extended lecture tour of the financial capitals of the world, a proclaim that he had cracked contrary to Museum Board rules.

In his defense, Paderanga noted that he had been in a "holdover" status in both PHIC subsidiary and CIIC, but this has did not match with the three stockbrokers, who, in something terse, demanded his resignation.

According to the grapevine, a case before the Ombudsman was even darkly hinted at.

In a testament to his negotiating skills, Paderanga was able to stave off an immediate departure and persuaded the PSE board, in a meeting Wednesday that lasted four hours until 8 p.m., to allow him to stay on as "holdover" president until the PSE board finds a replacement.

What is complicating the search now is that the former economic planning secretary has not ruled out a government, having been elected to that position by the general membership.

Someone has to tell Brando's guy way not leave the board if the PSE were to appoint an outsider as president. But, first, the different PSE factions have to agree among themselves to hire a person—someone like ex-Erwin Lessing?—willing to take on the broker's competing interests and super-size egos.

Good luck to the bigger problem.

MVP offensive

MANUEL V. Pangilinan, apparently believes his own spiel about PLDT and its future.

The chair of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. has declared to the Philippine Stock Exchange that he had acquired another 1,000-company shares of PLDT stock.

His PLDT holdings have now grown to 71,410 shares, from only 37,711 in October.

At yesterday's close of P1,060, the MVP pile is nearly over P80 million.

Biting the hands that feed

ADOLFO Pascual Jr. III joined party hands wrote against Hamlet, Jose Cuenco Jr., and Goffredo Luz, attacking the foreigning of the two gentlemen and the Kilusang Oligarch Movement for Free Elections for allegedly "treading" the electoral road in favor of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Strange accusation from a slightly-horse (to

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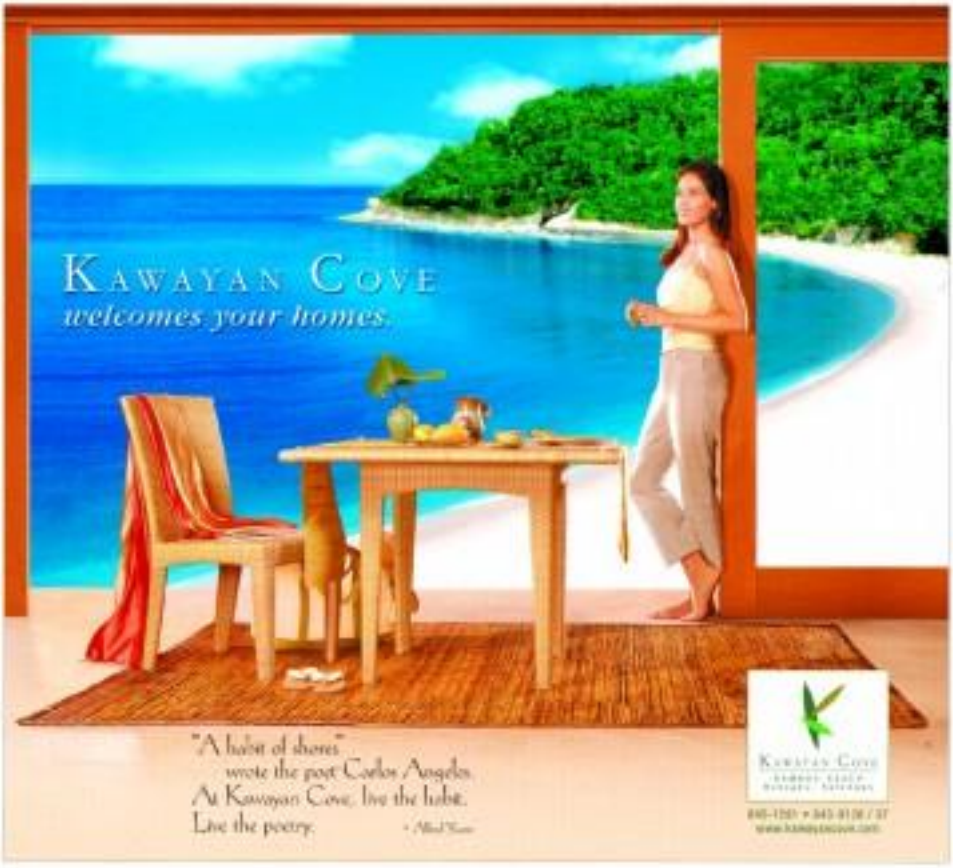

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Gov't slashes duties on capital equipment

By Bernard M. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT has approved the implementing rules of an executive order that brings down import duties on capital equipment, spare parts and accessories to a range of 0-5 percent from 1-10 percent.

Adopted by the Department of Trade and Industry Board of Investments, Department of Finance, National Economic and Development Authority and Bureau of Customs, the rules governing Executive Order No. 313 took effect on June 6 and would be effective for two years.

Qualified companies whose machinery, equipment or spare parts were landed on or before June 6, 2004 and arrived after that date but are yet withdrawn from customs, would still be entitled to the EO 313 incentives.

Trade Secretary Cesar S. Purisima said the government widened the duties on these items to make the country more attractive to investors amid increasing competition among Asian markets for foreign direct investments.

PURISIMA

"Lowering import duties enables industries to reduce their cost of doing business," Purisima said.

The official noted that all Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, except Singapore and the Philippines, grant tax and duty exemptions on imported capital.

He said a number of local industrial firms were inefficient because their machinery were outmoded.

With the reduced import duties, these firms could upgrade their equipment and prepare themselves for the entry in the Asean Free Trade Area.

Purisima also said incentives provided under EO 313 would level the playing field for investments over and non-investment export enterprises.

Signed last May 1, Executive Order No. 313 covers machinery and parts imported by new and expanding enterprises that are registered with the BOI.

However, BOI-listed businesses covered under the motor vehicle development program are excluded from enjoying the lowered tariffs.

Rubber exports up 43%

By Christine A. Saplacan

RUBBER exports rose by 43 percent in the first four months this year due to increased demand from Malaysia and China.

A report from the National Statistics Office showed that earnings from the sale of natural rubber rose to $81 million as of end-April from $57 million in the same period last year.

According to Philippine Rubber Industries Association chairperson Emilio Q. Ho, the Philippines was able to take advantage of the high price of rubber in the international market, which hovers at around $1,000 per metric ton.

"Malaysia keeps our rubber to process them, we also sell semi-processed rubber to China but only in very limited volumes," she noted.

Local rubber producers have asked the government to increase the tariffs on imported rubber products to a minimum of 10 percent and a maximum of 30 percent.

They claimed that the low tariff rates were destroying the local rubber industry.

The going tariff is 10 to 15 percent but it on products currently shipped to 15 percent duty.

These include plates, sheets and strip, hose, conveyor or transmission belts, inner tubes (for rubbers of cars and buses), nipples of baby feeding bottles, surgical gloves, floor coverings and bars and rubber parts.

Producers currently shipped a tariff of 15 percent, such as pneumatic tire and footwear, should be imposed a much higher tariff of 30 percent to 50 percent, it said.

Sincerity in governance

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

"YOU CAN'T feed all the people all the time." That is an oft-quoted saying when people encounter others who are not sincere. When it comes to governance, people who are not sincere are, number or later, found out. Sincerity often separates the different between successes and failures in good governance.

Bengzon experience

In the latter part of 2003, Benguet ingeniously fashioned a scheme to deal with smuggled agricultural products coming from China.

La Trinidad councilor John Bitn promised to mould help. He proved his sincerity by joining the farmers in gathering smuggling data, in-

COMMENTARY

specting consignments of smuggled goods, and going on raids of suspected warehouses.

As a result, the agriculture smuggling ran dropped from 40 percent at the start of the year to less than one percent within three months.

In the last elections, Bitn ran for a seat on the Benguet provincial board. Because of the sincerity he showed throughout the anti-smuggling drive, Bitn garnered the highest provincial board member votes in Benguet. He got 34,590 votes, even more than the 29,425 votes of Apolinario Lamet. He re-opened three-term mayor of Baguio.

Importation

The Alyansa Agrikultura, the largest coalition of farmers and fisherfolk today, proposed an agriculture agenda to all the presidential candidates before the elections. The farmers and fisherfolk acted based on the candidates' responses to the agenda.

"The presidential candidates may not be sincere when they agree to certain items in our proposed agenda," an Alyansa leader said. "They may agree just to get votes."

Fortunately, Dragon each agreed in general with the agenda, each likewise gave modifications or disagreements on specific items.

On the item on importation, however, all agreed that they should ensure "proper timing of government imports." This would be done through appropriate consultation with affected stakeholders.

Though the winning presidential candidate has not yet been proclaimed, it should be made known to the incumbent president that many poultry raisers feel betrayed. They believe that the candidates' agreement on appropriate consultation before government importation was not followed.

Because of the government announcement on the 18 million-kilo chicken importation, the chicken farm gate price has dropped from P55 a kilo to P52," said Cesgrotio Sun Diego, United Broiler Raisers Association president and an Alyansa agriculturists leader. "This is below the cost of production, which is at P65."

San Diego believes the government can still correct this error with two actions that must be announced immediately to stop the further downtrend in retail chicken farm gate prices.

The first is to require the 20 million kilos of allocated chicken imports under the Minimum Access Volume to be used up before granting any additional importation. This is because the supply situation may dictate that no additional importation is needed.

The second is to complete what many consider was a prematurely aborted consultation with the stakeholders. They should discuss when the importation should take place, if at all. For example, the importation might be better done during the peak month of December instead of the slack month of July.

Taking these two steps will do much in restoring the farmers' faith in government's sincerity. This is because it will comply with an Alyansa agenda item on consultation before importation and proper timing, which all the presidential candidates agreed to before the elections.

Smuggling

Another test of sincerity is the government's forthcoming decision on a proposal to allow the alleged smuggler of four containers of imported chicken to export the products and get the container. Last May 2, at the meeting of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Anti-Smuggling was effectively chaired by Secretary Angelo Reyes, this issue was discussed. It was indicated that charges could be filed against the alleged smuggler but that, in the meantime, the alleged smuggler could get the revenue from the transport of these goods.

It should be noted that strong measures against smugglers was also on the agenda of the Alyansa Agrikultura. The Alyansa believes that a smuggler must never benefit from his smuggled goods, which happened all too often in the past where the goods are disposed through "redemption" or "auction."

The Alyansa believes only three alternatives should be allowed for the disposition of smuggled goods: reexport to the originating country, destruction, or donation to the poor with appropriate safeguards.

Though charges against the alleged smuggler are now being prepared, we are still waiting for a report on how many have been found guilty and punished in the last three years. This remains a big question. In the meantime, the loss of smuggled goods would be the clearest signal that smuggling does not pay.

(The author is chair of Agrilinks, a private sector institution; former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrilinks@philonline.com or call/fax (02) 851-0633.)

ERC condones loans of 20 power co-ops

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission has approved the applications of 20 electric cooperatives to borrow their loans condoned, enabling the distributors to reduce power rates by as much as P1.16 per kilowatt hour (DPH) in covered areas.

Customers of the Aurgan Electric Cooperative (Dueled in Surigao) will benefit the most from the ERC's approval of the power distributor's loan condonation application as they will have to pay P1.16 per kWh less when the final ERC order is transmitted to theirs.

Power consumers in other parts of the country, mostly in the Visayas and Mindanao, will enjoy savings of between 11.46 centavos to 91.16 per kWh on their monthly electric bills.

"The Commission is committed to doing its part in the government's rural electrification program by fulfilling its mandated task to reduce the cost of electric cooperatives by loan condonation," ERC chair Nadolfo Albano Jr. said in a briefing yesterday.

A total of 1,086,794 customers are expected to benefit from the loan condonation approval, regardless of the consumer type. The rate reduction will apply to residential, industrial, and irrigation water system customers of the 20 electric cooperatives.

Items charged for public buildings and street lights will also be adjusted accordingly.

The combined amortization for the final loans to be condoned add up to around P211 million.

While 20 applications for loan condonation have already been approved, there are still 98 applications awaiting ERC decision.

Of the 98 pending applications, 83 have yet to be evaluated, while 15 are just awaiting for final audit by the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.

Albano said the approval of the 20 loan condonation applications should have been done sooner had it not been for Napocor's final audit requirements.

"It took us a while to issue the final approvals because we had to wait for the final audit by Napocor," Albano said. "But we'll be working overtime on this."

The electric cooperatives filed applications for loan condonation in compliance with Section 60 of Republic Act 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act.

Under the Epira provision, electric cooperatives will no longer have to remit amortization payments of their loans to the National Electrification Administration and other government agencies if these debts were used in finance rural electrification programs.

The funds will then become disposable income for the distribution utilities, making the next level's final audit a vital component leading to the approval of an electric cooperative's loan condonation request.

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BEAR, STEARNS & CO. STUDY

RP credit rating deteriorating

By Michelle V. Rertas

US-BASED investment bank Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc. gave the Philippines a credit rating of Ba2/BB, which means "deteriorating," based on its analysis of the political and economic risk factors in the country.

In its debut outlook for the second half of the year, Bear, Stearns' credit rating for the Philippines was worse than what it gave other Asian countries.

The firm described its outlook for China and Indonesia as "improving," while it said the expected credit performance of Korea, India, Thailand and Vietnam for the second half was "stable."

The bank said the Philippines' gross domestic product growth for 2004 will not exceed 5 percent, contrary to the government's expectation that this year's GDP will stand at between 4.9 percent to 5.4 percent.

"If recovery of investment would likely push GDP growth above 5 percent, or even up to 6 percent, but this is not likely to happen in 2004," said Bear, Stearns in its report on Asian economies.

Bear, Stearns based its credit outlook on the Philippines partly on the government's budget deficit, which it expected to reach over 4 percent of the GDP this year. It said the government's failure to significantly trim down its deficits indicated "tolerance" for its budgetary woes.

The financial government's budget deficit stood at P199.9 billion in 2003 from 165.5 billion the previous year. It is targeting to only slightly reduce it to P187.8 billion this year.

Bear, Stearns likewise cautioned the government's huge losses/gaps in finance operations of state-owned firms like the National Power Corp. as a risk factor. Its report on financing requirements this year, Napocor has to raise $1.5 billion—an amount the national government will have to guarantee.

Aside from budget problems, Bear, Stearns said political uncertainties could also take its toll on the Philippine economy. It cited the jitters caused by the delay in the canvassing of votes for president and vice president, and the possible small margin by which Fernando Poe Jr. could win the presidential race over key ruling party candidate Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"If the official count is prolonged and (President Macapagal's) final margin of victory is small, nonessential policy questions could be satisfied by opposition challenges to the credibility of the May 10 election outcome," Bear, Stearns said.

Bear, Stearns said the Philippines, together with Indonesia, will belong to the "lower growth group," where GDP for 2004 and 2005 will only average at 5 percent.

On the other hand, it said China, Vietnam, India and Thailand will belong to the "high growth group," which will post GDP growth rates of 7 percent and 8 percent, it said Singapore, Malaysia, Korea and Hong Kong will belong to the medium growth group, which will post a GDP growth of between 5 percent and 7 percent.

Bear, Stearns also said the Philippines will be among the countries in the region most vulnerable to the effects of the possible higher interest rates, commodity price pressures brought about by oil/raw materials, and the expected slowdown of China's economy.

PDTC gets SEC nod to operate

SECURITIES custodian Philippine Depository & Trust Corp. has secured the approval of the Securities and Exchange Commission to operate as a transfer agent.

PDTC is part of the Fixed Income Exchange group led by the Bankers Association of the Philippines.

As a transfer agent, it plans to act as a registrar for companies which issue equity or debt securities in scripless form.

PDTC will also seek exemption from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to be allowed as a repository or custodian for securities under BSP supervision.

Under Securities Regulations, a transfer agent should have paid up capital of at least P1 million. PDTC has an authorized capital worth P400 million. Elizabeth Sanchez

Non-brokers, ex-bankers eyed to fill PSE post

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

A FORMER pension fund administrator and incumbent private-sector directors of the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) are being considered to fill in the post of president at the local bourse.

Sources told the Inquirer that the PSE board, under Ali cia Arenaya, would act as a "selection committee" that would, in two weeks, come out with a list of possible candidates for president.

Cayetano Paderanga Jr., the former PSE president said he would work with boards and committees to help the stock exchange until the replacement is named.

Paderanga last Wednesday stepped down after almost a year's stint at the PSE. He said he has accepted an offer to teach again at the University of the Philippines School of Economics.

Renato Valencia, a former administrator of the private employees pension fund Social Security System (SSS), former chief of Unionbank of the Philippines and an investment banker, is also being eyed for the top post, sources said.

Incumbent non-brokers also being considered for the post are Peter Favila, senior adviser to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and a veteran banker; Raul Fernandez, a University of the Philippines dean and professor of Law; and Francis Lim, a senior partner of Accralaw.

Sources however said that Favila and Lim have expressed reservations about taking on the job.

Other non-brokers who have seats in the PSE's 13-man board are Government Service Insurance System general manager Winston Garcia, San Miguel Corp. president Ramon ang and Philippine Long Distance & Telephone Co. treasurer Ramoncito Ocampo.

Sources said Paderanga's sudden decision to resign was prompted by discussions that he held the top posts of an affiliate of a listed company and a private institution simultaneously.

As an issuer reporting last May 31, the PSE board directed him to resign from PSEC Investment & Management Corp. (PSEC) as required by the terms of his employment with the PSE. Sources chose to Paderanga explained that he retained a "holdover" status at PSEC as well as CDE Information Inc., until his successor is named.

Sources said the PSE president should not hold a position limited to a listed company.

PSEMC is a sister company of listed firm PSEC Exploration Corporation.

"I was allowed to keep CDE status, but the new board had a change of sentiments," Paderanga said. "I had no bidder anything."

Paderanga, 51, earned his doctorate degree in economics at Stanford University and holds as a graduate of Commerce at the De La Salle University. He pursued graduate studies at the Center for Research and Communication, He has been a director of the PSE since March 2003, and remains a director until his replacement would need his qualifying shares in the board.

Paderanga was the former Socioeconomic Planning secretary. He assumed the position in February, replacing former PSE president Emerico Lerang.

A professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics, he is currently a member of the Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and as an executive director of the Asian Development Bank.

Among his duties as PSE president was to restore the bourse to having the trading floor that were started when the Makati and Manila stock exchanges unified.

Those reforms, he said, would bring the local bourse as par with global standards.

RP stocks slide 0.63%

STOCKS dipped yesterday led by consumer phone group PLDT, on concern over a potential hike in local interest rates if the United States raises its benchmark rates this month.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) fell 98 or P1.868, tracking the drop in its New York listed American Depositary Receipts of $.11 percent or $0.63 to $56.90.

PLDT's 40-percent owned mobile-phone unit, Filipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), were unchanged at P1.76. "FLAT AIRS correct in New York, coupled with international investors' expectations increasing soon in the US might be cause negative news, weighted on investor," brokerage 2Trade4ata.com said in a report.

US Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan said on Tuesday the central bank would do "what is required" to keep inflation in check, spurring speculation that the Fed might raise rates by 50 basis points.

The Philippine central bank has not touched benchmark interest rates a cut of 25 basis points to July. The overnight borrowing rate is 6.75 percent and the lending rate is 9.0 percent.

The main stock index ended 9.67 points or 0.63 percent lower at 1,533.73 points.

Its worst dropped to P979.38 million from Wednesday's P921.1m million. Losers outnumbered gainers 20 to 20 and those were 42 stocks unchanged.

Analysts expect the market to remain bearish on Friday ahead of the Independence Day celebration on Saturday, with counting of votes for president and vice president in Congress for from one week after the May 10 elections.

2Trade4ata.com sees the market moving within the range of 1,530.00 to 1,549.00pts.

Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), the country's largest power distributor, dropped despite news it will raise electricity rates here next month as traders perceived the hike was merely a non-recovery mechanism.

Meralco's B-shares, which are open to foreigners, dropped 1.40 percent or 50 centavos to P35.50 a share, narrowed to 9 lifters, were unchanged at P9.90. Reuters

Cocktales

Sit, who not only is to bed now with his alleged flagship home beautifying but whose son Agustino Patrimonio III is 100% sought the financial help of the very same harmful and the two gentlemen as he could save his son in the local courts under on behalf of his father.

Gokiatko has documents to show that Agustino Patrimonio III defaulted for many years on P100,000 by Standard Motor Business Club to help fund the various cases he and his foundation for Moral Restoration in Public Service, Inc. filed against the Commission on Elections.

But that was eight years ago, a very long time in the quick-shifting political seasons.

Heard through the grapevine

LIGO The lies finally overcame his media division and has agreed to appear in a print and TV spot to thank the Filipino consumers for making Tanduay, now celebrating its 120th year, the second biggest rum distillery in the world.

The Lucianos do not still appear on Channel 7's "SOP" Sunday inspirational show, within a 30-minute segment co-produced by the station and Tanduay.

(Email: sol@inquirer.com.ph or tedvalo_pi@hotmail.com.)

Rising prices of energy may stall growth in Apec

By Abigail L. Ho

RISING energy prices may arrest growth in Pacific Rim economies including the Philippines, energy experts or an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum warned Thursday.

An Apec forum study on energy said recently issues warned that "rising energy prices may cause growth in Apec economies to stall due to high oil import dependency and an inflexible energy supply structure."

Energy demand within Apec will grow faster than in the rest of the world, meeting long-term projections on energy prices.

Developing countries, however, would face difficulties raising the money to finance capital-intensive energy projects.

The Philippines alone would require some $60 billion to meet its power needs until 2020.

According to the Asia Pacific Energy Research Center (Aperc), the country's investment needs are among the largest in the 21 member Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) region.

Apec as a whole would need some $3.4 trillion to $4.4 trillion in investments from 2000 to 2020 to develop area energy infrastructure, the group said.

Because the Philippines is still a developing economy, securing the required funds to meet these investment needs may prove to be a burden.

"The burden of energy investment is often greatest for developing economies that have big energy requirements but limited capacities to raise finances," Apec said.

Total energy demand in the region is seen to spike by around 60 percent from 1998 to 2020 or to about 2.1 percent per year.

Electricity demand alone will likely rise by 3.2 percent a year within that same period, with growing income and widening scope of electrification as the main demand drivers.

Demand for imported oil, on the other hand, will not recede in the coming years. It is even seen to increase to 65 percent by 2020 from the current level of 56 percent.

While investment needs placed at high levels and demand quickly outpacing over the next 15 to 16 years, Apec economies would have to be even more flexible in their energy supply infrastructure to ensure that energy supply would remain reasonably priced. With a report from AFP

TAX DELINQUENCY

SC dismisses BIR case vs Lhuillier

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE SUPREME Court has dismissed a tax delinquency case filed by the Bureau of Internal Revenue against Michael Lhuillier Ownership Inc.

The SC cited in a decision penned by Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. that the BIR was misdirected in trying to collect the 5-percent list on lending investors from pawnshops.

The SC said the Tax Code treats lending investors and pawnshops differently.

It also noted that while the Tax Code requires lending investors to pay a fixed income ranging from P250 to P1,000 depending on the income, publics they are situated, pawnshops are only liable for a fixed tax of P1,000.

The SC upheld earlier decisions of the Court of Tax Appeals and the Court of Appeals.

Both said that the Tax Code only imposes the 5-percent gross income tax on lending investors and not on pawnshops.

"While it is true that pawnshops are engaged in the business of lending money, they are not considered 'lending investors' for the purpose of imposing the 5 percent taxes," said the SC.

In 1997, the BIR directed Lhuillier to pay over P3 million in unpaid lending investor taxes.

Lhuillier, however, argued that pawnshops were not subject to the tax because they are not lending investors.

Other members of the pawning industry likewise refused to pay the 5-percent tax.

Lhuillier brought its case to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, later the CTA, denied the pawnshop's petition.

The Court of Lhuillier to bring its case to the CTA, which ruled in the pawnshop's favor.

The BIR then went to the CA and the SC, both of which ruled against the BIR.

The SC decision also prevents the BIR from collecting value-added taxes (VAT) from pawnshops because under the Tax Code, only lending investors collect VAT.

The BIR earlier said it was running after members of the Chamber of Pawnbrokers because many of its members have not been remitting VAT since the 1990s, stating that the Tax Code likewise exempts them from VAT.

PNOC unit eyes Malampaya field

A UNIT of state-owned Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC) is considering developing an offshore oil reserve near the country's largest gas field, a senior official said on Thursday.

"We are studying the feasibility of producing oil from the Malampaya oil site," Rafael Betoncino, president of PNOC Exploration Corp., told reporters.

"We don't have to be the majority stakeholder. We are willing to go into partnership with the private sector," he added.

The oil reserve lies below the gas reserves in the offshore Malampaya area near Palawan island in the country's southwest.

Energy Undersecretary Rolando Mabilangay said the area has an estimated recoverable oil reserves of between 25 million and 30 million barrels.

PNOC Exploration holds a 10-percent stake in the Malampaya gas field.

Shell Philippine Exploration B.V.s unit of the Royal Dutch Shell group, and Chevron Texas hold a stake of 45 percent each.

Earlier this week, the Philippine government said it may re-talks with three firms that expressed an interest in developing the Malampaya oil site after The Shell-led consortium said it may not pursue the project.

"It's purely a business decision on their part. They have other investments in other parts of the world that could be a better investment, and we respect that," Mabilangay said.

Mabilangay said the government had given the Shell-led group to the end of the week to finalize whether it would develop the Malampaya project. Reuters

LIFESTYLE

Healing garden is abloom

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gonlub Noyda

THE HEALING Garden at the University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital Center (entrance 322 on Padre Faura, Manila) is now lush with flowers and foliage, thanks to the donations of the UP's alum, Dr. Cecilia Ledesma Llanes, and her supporters, particularly the Orient group and the Los Baños Orchid Society (LBOS).

What the garden was unequipped to become, everything was newly planted (though a cement-framed shed already bore fresh, thrilled flowering bougainvillea cloth from donated). But it promises to be a beautiful one to inspire healing and wellness.

In the 7:30 a.m. quiet sought, the vision to make a garden blazes within patients, caregivers and even visitors cracked the joy of living in the midst of nature's bounty has become so alive. Joy is a feeling the O could rediscover because it's known to healing (Pragmatic) nothing.

Set up by the Dewey Foundation, the pergola provides amenities that offer pleasurable hours and bring back meaning to life. The activities include not only gardening and horticulture as inspired by the Healing Garden's line of sensory therapy, gardening and visual arts, exercises and meditation.

Garden clubs in a hospital

Among the first to respond to Dr. Llanes's call for assistance in planning the Healing Garden on hospital grounds, were her good friends Tony and Tina Perez, business entrepreneurs and garden enthusiasts. To get things started, the Perezes suggested a garden club in the premises.

The O Garden Club was a natural to handle the design of the Ossera Foundation, which Tony Perez also set up, it would eventually be joined by the LBOS, ensuring greater interactivity.

Ossera, according to Tony Perez, means "Living" in Japanese, the limited structures in the Philippines' dominant urban center in Kobe, Japan. As he was then touring the Healing Garden project with Dr. Llanes, he thought it was an apt name for the foundation he was organizing to oversee the project.

Donations in cash and kind

Many people contributed to meet the various needs of the project, most of them in-minded individuals (artists, designers, landscape architects, etc.) who donated equipment and professional services. The final coming-in was, "Pete for a Cause," held with the help of Diane Silvestre's Artists Guild of the Philippines, who also is responsible for the foundation's call.

The garden's annual "blooming" is the handiwork of the Los Baños Orchid Society, whose members select the plants and flowers and put them in the appropriate sites. LBOS president Jose Lacap clarifies that "Orchid" in the society's name does not mean the group deals only with orchids (the only LBOS is interested in all flowering plants).

From where we stand, it also looks like the greatness need on gardens as a sort of spectator. At least, that's how it seems with the Healing Garden. LBOS members come all the way from Los Baños where they live, to do gardening chores and hold meetings at the O.

With Tony and Tina Perez and the LBOS leading the way, the quadrangle has become obstacle-ridden. Different varieties of plants grow in circular patches like giant dish gardens, tall ones in the center, compact at the edges. One such patch has orange pansies, for an Indigo, their buds about to burst into bloom. They eat indeed like the lowest O quite.

Incidentally, LBOS has a very active group of officers. Besides Ms Lacap (first row): C Lantin, vice president; Lyn Abaya, secretary; Lilia Constantin, treasurer; Bert Vergara, PRO; Vic Ojita, Tess Dizon, Marina Campos, Tony Perez, Lydia Hernandez, Helen Almazyer and Gil Domingo, (rear) regular members.

Workshops

As a recent horticulture gardening workshop, one of several the pair conducts that conduct in cooperation with the Ossera group, then presented Prof. Rowena Quitoriano, an expert on medicinal plants, who showed that sometimes it is far more effective and economical to grow your own medicine than to buy them from on the over-the-counter.

The group has lined up therapy programs until December. The next one, on June 26, will be on organic gardening with Prof. Bet Lantin as lecturer.

The healing garden at the moment is not limited to the quadrangle. It also includes all the areas around the building—the sides and especially the front yard on which grows an ancient acacia tree, a pride of the O, its wide branches lending shade to all who pass by.

In a matter of the months ahead, plans and the medicine as well as the cooking will be grown and displayed, another project in the making.

Those interested in the workshops may contact Tina Perez, 09175134250; or Chico Angeles, O administrator, cell 09189015 6028, local 3928.

E-mail the author at dorisnoyda@yahoo.com

Table top fountains from Asian Plum Marine

A piece of nature for Dad

GIVE Dad a piece of nature on Father's Day. An indoor fountain that will fill a room with the soothing sounds of flowing water may help him relax and embrace the flow of energy.

We customize yet affordable imported tabletop fountains from China, one Asian importer claims, a frame and style more. Pick from ornate kinds of fountains: Pastoral Series, Perennial, Water Steps, Natural Tiers, Bread Rocks, Chinese Spring and Rock Garden.

The fountains are made of natural materials like bamboo, limestone and polished stones. When choosing an indoor fountain, get one that doesn't splash and is easily maintained.

Asian Plum Home, owned by Anne Marie Perquet, is at Aguirre corner Flores Streets, Bel-Air Village, Makati City. The store is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Call 8898888.

GUESS WHO? Justice Minister Louis Abbass, superboss Louis Abbass, cultural attaché of Venezuela Juan Goldstein, Chino Romulo Enriquez, grand hostess Helle Abbass, and Brazilian Ambassador Claudio Maria Henrique da Costa

HAIL, HAIL! Alice Briones, Helen Ong, Nilmar Zaman, Bangladesh Ambassador Munir-Uz-Zaman and Clara Lobregat

CHIT Goho, Pilo Aquino and Monaco Bautista with Mario Lanzoles

Venice masque ball mesmerizes Manila

HIT darlings, Claire Goldhuber of the Ascension Embassy, popular Paul Koh of the Singaporean Embassy, and Czech Embassy Second Secretary Katrina Vorkova

GOLDEN couple, Armandes Llorico da Silva with her husband, Portuguese Ambassador João Gustavo da Silva, and divine French Ambassador Renée Veyres

NARDA Carnacho with Ann and Tobi Beaman

RADIO Alcina

I Wish like Venice: the water twists and the labyrinth and the grandeur making swaggers the soft source of the sea.

Napoleon had pompously called Venice "the finest drawing room in Europe." The description applied to the Abbass' grand home, which was outfitted to look like Venice when the couple organized a colorful Bal Masque.

The whole residence had the green carnival ambiance superbly done by the artistic-decorators par excellence, Jun-Jun Abbass, in her, pelengges.

There were masks of mystery and imagination—colorful, lime, neon, sequins, feathers, sequins, strings, strapless and Picasso-like's long noses—all wondrous fantasies of finest, gold and silver.

By the light of the grand chandeliers at the foyer was flashing buttonhole Louie Abbass and his wife, the consul of Guatemala and the town's top hostess with the mostest, Mellie Abbass. They welcomed the guests who dressed in fabulous masks embellished with glitter, gold cords and brilliant plumes. Amid the flurry of exotic and richer tapas, cocktails began.

It is rumor among those who were out there from the chi-chi diplo-corp. The party looked like a United Nations conference.

Okay, it's some-drop some. Leading the pack was European Union Ambassador Jan de Boer and his wife, Agnes de Kok, and Belgian Ambassador Christian Tauscher and his wife, Gil, who were flushed with radiance.

There were also US Ambassador Paul Dimond and his wife, Carolyn, who were all smiles behind their masks. Ambassador of the Order of Malta Enrique Yanguas and his wife, Letty, were too elegant in their evening wear.

Mexican Ambassador Enrique Hubbard, wife Marianna and their daughter Marianita enjoyed the party.

The bubbly champagne, wine, beer and hard liquor flowed like Pagsanjan falls, which got many from the Embassy row feeling it all sung out.

Rocking on the floor were such festivities as Tito and Pacito de Guzman, Bert and Vera Cantos, Lisabella Villanueva and the gang of three—Ben Fernales, Pitoy Moreno and Emmy Bedan. Also there were Noel and Celine Bautista, Nuky Puppos and her fun daughters, Amy and Mabel Abano, popular Erniz and Et Yan, Nelly Bengson, Ping and Evelyn Duenas, Jess Lennox and Nene Sandoz L., Abe and Mel Licaros, hockey and horse tidbits, Loletta Castillo, Mac and Linda Gaw, George and Pilarita Rivera, attorneys Margaret Lim Kwek, Joe and Marilou Abejuelos, and Karen Mercurio, in a flowing green chiffon gown.

Absolutely stunning in a smashing Ben Pao rules ras silk crepe tuxedo, with stylish open cape encrusted in jewel-colored stones, Mollie was at her best as she welcomed everyone into the dining hall for dinner.

The masked guests enjoyed an excellently prepared buffet lunch cut by the Mandarin-de-ce Manila.

After dinner entertainment was a dramatic presentation of Lipa Italian an songs and Broadway musical classics, sung by superstar Aileen Espinosa Cura, Lulu Tenorio Castaneda, and Pimbelle Bone Santillan, emcee Jonathan Bautista and Adryan Navarro, and baritone Emanuel Sibay. They were accompanied by Mary Ann Barbas.

Now, pelengges, whoever said that only the young ones really have fun and party!

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Vitt Hogan or Keokoh Mon

Toast to Israel

Some 600 guests filled the Grand Ballroom of Hotel InterContinental Manila when the Embassy of Israel celebrated the 56th Independence Day of the State of Israel.

Ambassador Yehuchua Sagi and Mrs. Hana Sagi welcomed the guests. With them were deputy chief of mission Avi Dvir, first secretary Zina Rumesh, and Dana Rumesh.

Drawing applause was the special performance of the talented Seeds of Fun, an in-cheerleader/dancer Kenya leads cut-jet.

The barely two-able, Mikhail Cohen, was a finalist of the John Lennon songwriting contest in 2002; he won the Class Lama-word jazz award and is at the helm of Jeanette Rawon, which performs all over Israel.

Pianist Mattan Shmis was the recipient of the John Lennon songwriting contest award for jazz composition in 2000, while the pianist, Yoav Pelatchek, composes music for movies and television.

There were loaded yummy Middle Eastern food on the long buffet table. Everyone threw tea the window for cake to resuming mealtime for that night because that's the way it works, darlings.

One society girl was searching her gal at the buffet table filling her plate up like there was no tomorrow. She said, "To think she had turn a girdle figure only two years ago. Now look at her, she's doubled in."

Truth!

Needless to say, pelengges, an affair like this always brings out the hoohoos—the diplomatic gang, mega business honey, weight and Comic Worlds's fashionable social pack who were on there line the almost Chino hosts, including, never mind if their Nicholas and Gavin were killing them.

THE FAB hosts with popular couple Tarceve and Andy Libero

THE RED-AND-BLACK GALS Gilda Salonga and Nina Puyat

OH YES, it's Ric and Pinang Tiongson!

SOCIALITES Teli Aycon and Jasmin Marchesi

BULGARI'S Maria Kangiser

HYPE. Kabalina with her husband, Russian Ambassador Anatoly Ninkogenov, and socialite Olga Severina (Hame)

SAY SMILE! Argentine Ambassador Mario Schoff with Bolivia consul Helen Ong, Silvia Schoff and Tiago-consul Erik Costa

TOASTING to the 56th Independence Day of Israel are Czech Ambassador Stanislav Slavicky, Israel Ambassador Yehuchua Sagi and Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Jose Eades Jr.

PAKISTANI Ambassador Hussain Kazmi

RABBIT Goodwish

ONE of our town's best dressed, Tigulo Dijemal, with her pal Yael Abecasis

Sanskrit way to the beautiful woman

BECAUSE I was preoccupied with aromatherapy and essential oils, it was only a matter of time that I would explore Ayurveda and its beauty principles.

The brand's familiar, which is fun, don't invent "beautiful woman," and ayurveda means "science of life." The founders are Cyrus Mahoney, who frontsits and former supermodel Christy Turlington.

In Ayurveda, the universal elements of air, space, fire, water and earth combine and create the three governing forces known as Doshas: Vata—air (dry skin), Pitta—fire (normal) combination skin) and Kapha—earth (oily/impure skin).

MAKEOVER 911

Kristy Sadsad

The goal is to bring your Dosha in balance. A balanced Dosha is exemplified by smooth, clear, beautiful and radiant skin.

The brand has only 20 products, but they're all that one will ever need. You may take the quiz via the website www.sundari.com.

Tandemark: The use of scented skin oil in place of a toner.

Step 1: Cleanser—hardly foams but is super-emulsifier and removes makeup. Step 2: Skin oil—has non-greasy residue; it soak moisture in. Step 3: Moisturizer (that's very light. Your hydrated skin will feel like it's holding in water without the grease. It's as if your Dosha is collagen-injected.

I use a Kapha (oily skin), and got the range of lotions exfoliating cleanser, Kapha skin oil (lavender, rosemary and peppermint blend), and conditioner balancer.

I have luxuries in the line. I got full sizes of the 1) Neem night cream P2,750—Neem is to India what Lavender is to the French. Double, it smells very bitter and has the same exfoliating effect and antiseptic properties. Although meant for 40s or 50s skin, I can just feel to have it for a good night's sleep. I discovered that it lightens pimple marks and makes my skin firmer. I apply it on fresh minor scratches, and burns, and sunshine my eyebrows and upper lip after waxing.

2) Chamomile eye oil—I have noticed fine lines starting up with bags in my eyes, and this eye oil is just incredible. It soothes my tired eyes, de-puffs and evens out lines.

The Neem eye cream a recent move for puffiness and dark circles. But I didn't get it because I don't have dark circles. I can spot a little of my favorite night cream over the eye oil and the effects are the same.

3) The Kapha skin oil, P1,450—the one item in the Sonic range I will definitely repurchase. I would love to get the whole range but due to budget constraints I can make do with another cleanser with the same properties and some greasy moisturizer for day. But there is nothing like the skin oil to keep my baby skin. It won't be the same, seriously wise, though.

4) Toner oil-control cranberry keeps down at bay, treats pimples and is an excellent foundation primer for the greasy lined. It mattifies without dehydrating skin.

5) Nourishing night oil, P4,995, the most expensive by far—meant for very dry and mature skin. I think people younger than 35 shouldn't even touch the stuff unless they are not moisturizers with dry, damaged skin.

Purchase on point skin oil: Kapha is actually the scariest smelling one but it feels cool, refreshing and actually controls oil production. Vata—scented oil and orange scent is actually my favorite smell. Pitta—with pungency, heat and pimples is an aphrodisiac—so kind. My favorite range overall is the Pitta healing line with oil that heavenly scented Neem. But the Kapha skin oil can be a substitute.

Searching for hard-to-find essential oils for the day? Sunari?

I have been searching for patchouli oil to smell because it helps suppress my appetite but I can't find it anywhere. An East Indian friend of mine gave me the weight-control tip. I discovered where to get some ylang-ylang and rose oil. Still looking for the others. Will keep you posted.

KAPHA detox soap

HEALING Pitta mood set

CHAMOMILE eye oil

BLEMISH treatment T-zone oil control

NIGHTTIME nourishing oil

Book pays tribute to Filipinas

THE COFFEE TABLE book, "Filipinas: Tribute to the Filipina Woman," was recently launched at the NBC Tent at the Bonifacio as part of the 2004 French Spring festivities.

French Ambassador Bruno Heyrat was only congratulated Louis Paul Hennoff of Supply (fabric) Services for coming up with the book.

After the book-launching, Jewelers International presented a fashion show in cooperation with top designers.

Chin Chin Gutierrez, who recently held a concert in France to promote Filipino culture and her album of folk songs called "Tinig," was also present to give a soulful rendition of "Isa Lang Ang Ina."

FRANCES Lim, Ambassador Bruno Heyrat, Angelo Poblador of Jewelmer and Mr. Louis Paul Hennoff

JACQUES Brunello of Jewelmer

TESSA Prieto-Valdes

CHIN-CHIN Gutierrez during her rendition of "Sa Ilalim ng Dagat"

JANNIE Dailisan of Silk Connox

MARIE Tanguy, Bonnie Lazaro and Louis Paul Hennoff of SDS

FRENCH Embassy's (first) Secretary Martine Vacanni

The fashionista's recommended reading list

EVERYONE is looking for ways to improve oneself and the quality of one's life. This is probably why self-help shelves in bookstores have multiplied by leaps and bounds in recent years.

Fashionistas are not exempt from this innate need for improvement. And if you are also in constant pursuit of imparting some sartorial sensibilities, it's high time to invest in a book or two enabling such means as what clothes best suit your body type, how to look chummy or how to wear vintage pieces.

Here's my recommended list of style manuals that run the gamut from fashion basics to more substantive takes on developing personal flair.

Apples' Pickings

Apples Aberin-Sandkvoort

'Vintage Style'

By Tiffany Dubin and Ann E. Berman

Vintage clothing is all the rage and it was never more apparent than when a luminous Bonita Eslinger walked down the red carpet in a 1950s woven goddess-like sensory-pillow gown. As a result, resourceful fashionistas are redoubling core in sporadic vintage boutiques and flea markets and abroad or in places like eBay-ebay and Bandung for unique finds worth salvaging.

But how exactly do you choose, wear and care for such pieces? And what's the best way to incorporate those into a modern wardrobe? Find out all that and more in this "edit" to vintage dressing that encourages you to develop your own personal look with the use of one-of-a-kind but versatile vintage finds.

Available at Powerbooks

'In Style, Secrets of Style'

By the editors of In Style

Anything the need for a personal style guide, editors of In Style Magazine put together a manual of sorts that discusses fashion basics such as fit, fabric, color and style important, "fantasy shirts", which focus on dressing to suit every body type. The helpful book also tackles style questions such as accessories, underwear and every imaginable article of clothing by every occasion.

Available at Fully Booked and Powerbooks

'The Lucky Shopping Manual'

By Kim Pierce and Andrea Linett

Lucky magazine is fast becoming a monthly must-read for fashionistas here and abroad. The mag usually features the latest trends and items in the market and is basically a shopping guide. "The Lucky Shopping Manual" is an even better treat as it is more in-depth and shows readers basic pieces, some general rules on how to wear them and how to use what one already has in the closet. And for inspiration, the book also features "real" women (read: not supermodel flawless or movie-star gorgeous) with very distinct styles.

Available at Powerbooks and Fully Booked

'The Bombshell Manual of Style'

By Lynn Sivier

Have you been lusting a body-sensible but boring, monotonous wardrobe dressed in demure-inspired garb, your face exhausted by nude lipstick and not much else? Perhaps it's time to release your inner bombshell via this unique and classic approach to achieving a 50s-style bloomer-like aura.

This insightful book is both entertaining and enlightening. It's especially written for those who wish to dress up a merry mix of lady-like demureness and sassy chutzpah. Find out how those terms, as outmoded as they are, what they mean, how they went there and the like. If the process, you just might discover that bombshells are not necessarily bimbos and are in fact a feisty, gutsy lot.

Available at Power Books

'What Not To Wear and What Not to Wear Part 2'

By Trinny Woodall and Susannah Constantine

Finally, a couple of "brutally frank" but extremely useful tomes that tell you exactly what not to wear with a particular body type or age group or occasion. So, example, book one will tell you that spray-on lycra is not for someone with a bulging belly simply because "you look like you stuck your stuffed into a sausage skin."

The very often wicked humor Cosmo-like approach is refreshing and encourages you to enjoy fashion. So go ahead and have a good laugh while you're reminded that "diamonds with mismatch are a figment of Jackie Collin's imagination."

Available at Fully Booked and Powerbooks

'Does This Make Me Look Fat?'

By Leni Felder

"I cannot tell a lie, Seated (two over) feel fat and bloated," says Nicole Campbell. Take heart in the fact that no one, not even well-toned, thin-as-sticks supermodels, is exempt from ever feeling fat or unsexy. Plus, there are ways to make any figure look fabulous without resorting to a drastic, last-ditch resort to the Hoodia. The practical manual shows you how to do just that with the use of colors (dark monochromatic colors are best), patterns (vertically yes a must), fabric (stay away from bulky, shiny ones) and other such pertinent subjects. It also teaches "camouflage chic" or simply put, clothes that hide or disguise imagined or real figure flaws.

Available at Fully Booked

'Style'

By Kate Spade

"True style comes when you develop your own rules," says designer Kate Spade. In this charming, reader-friendly book, she also tells us that style is not necessarily innate and certainly not exclusive to women like Jacqueline Onassis and Diana Vreeland. It is something that you can develop through time, experience and by opening up yourself to the world around you.

Available at Powerbooks and Fully Booked

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